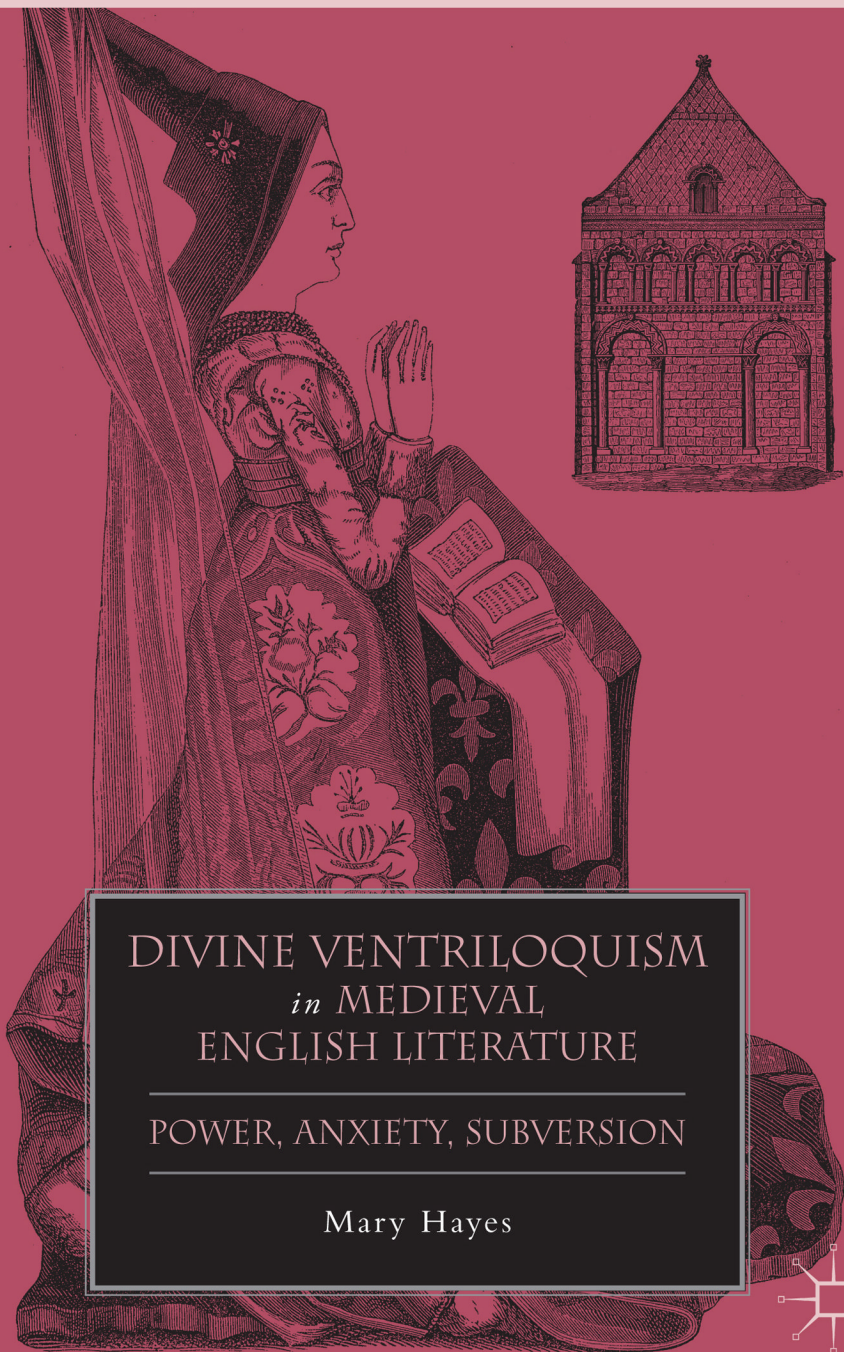


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in MEDIEVAL
ENGLISH LITERATURE

POWER, ANXIETY, SUBVERSION

Mary Hayes



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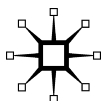
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*To my family:
Jan, John, and Johnny Hayes;
and Jim, Chutzpah, and Zeke Hayes-Lawrence*

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	xiii
Introduction: Listen Up!	1
Part I Powerful Fantasies of Christ's Voice	
1 The Talking Dead	25
2 Christ's Lips Move	53
Part II Anxiety and the Clerical Voice	
3 The Master's Voice	83
4 Cursed Speakers	109
Part III Lay Subversion in the Eucharistic Canon	
5 Belly Speech	139
6 Playing the Prophet	169
Conclusion: Resounding Voices	193
<i>Notes</i>	197
<i>Bibliography</i>	225
<i>Index</i>	239

PREFACE

I owe a great deal of thanks to various institutions, colleagues, family members, and friends for helping me complete my first monograph.

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I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to my partner, Jim Lawrence, and my two black labs, Chutzpah and Zeke, for their love and support while I was working on this book in its final stages. Jim and I have been friends for over six years, having met in Antarctica while doing a marathon. From these auspicious origins, a beautiful partnership grew. My two dogs gave me wise counsel while accompanying me on jogs and walks in the woods. Jim and I got married in March 2011 in a “medievaesque” wedding with the dogs as flower girl and ring bearer, just as this book was about to be published.

Parts of [Chapter 1](#) were originally published as “The Talking Dead: Resounding Voices in *The Exeter Book Riddles*” (*Exemplaria* 20 [2008]: 123–42). Reprinted with permission from W. S. Maney & Sons Ltd. The URL for the original version of this journal is:

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INTRODUCTION

LISTEN UP!

This book studies medieval attitudes toward the ventriloquism of God's and Christ's voices through human media. Perhaps most obviously, it explores the role of priests, who spoke for God when they preached, instructed sinners in confession, and performed the liturgy. But this book also accounts for less likely sources for the divine voice such as pagan idols, who revealed occult oracles yet could become appropriated as organs for the divine voice; lay speakers, who unlawfully used the clerical voice and, by extension, God's voice, by speaking sacred words that did not pertain to them; bodily sources other than the mouth, such as a churlish lay person's anus that uttered divine speech through a fart; and actors on stage, who ventriloquized Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper in dramatic reenactments of that event. Simply put, the essence of each of these ventriloquial acts is that they relocate the voice from its conventional source in the speaker's mouth, in this case, *in ore Domini*, to a mortal medium. In these medieval examples of ventriloquism, we see a resignification of the practice's original significance as the pagan mediumship of divine or departed entities that the prophet Jeremiah and the Church Fathers decried. Yet, the medieval ventriloquial performances that I study also problematize the standards for legitimate revelation explained in scripture and early Christian commentary. The texts that I have chosen collectively demonstrate that the divine voice became a contested site of power as priests acquired more institutional endorsement and, ironically, devotion in some ways became putatively more lay-centered. Thus, we can interpret the circumstances under which God's voice was ventriloquized as an index for a complex and changing religious climate that debated by whom, how, and even if divine revelation could transpire through human speech.

Ventriloquism was the most important element of medieval devotion, which attended to an invisible God who revealed himself in his

voice through human media that were remote from him. The elements of medieval devotion on which I focus are sacred reading performances, preaching, confession, and the consecration of the Eucharist. All of these performances involved acts of ventriloquism, as the divine voice underpinned them and was then channeled through human agents. A focus on divine ventriloquism allows us to examine how the sense of hearing influenced medieval religious devotion (which has largely been described as iconocentric), how verbal performances reflected on divine presence, and how (and which) human speakers could (or could not) render sacred speech.

Optimally, the divine voice was ventriloquized by the clergy, God's chosen messengers. This galvanized the normative relationship between the priest and his people, making them his subservient listeners. At times, though, this relationship became confounded when lay people appropriated the clerical voice and uttered divine speech that was normally reserved for the clergy. In this way, the usual relationship between the laity, the clergy, and God became subverted, with the laity exercising power through using their voices as the clergy would. The perspective provided by studying the priest's normative ventriloquism of the divine voice allows us to observe the power relationships that this performance implies—between God and the priest, between the priest and the people, and between God and the people—and how the conventional operations of power become problematized in the voice's actual use in a devotional setting.

This book covers the late Anglo-Saxon period through the eve of the Protestant Reformation, a period in which we observe changes in the relationship between the clergy and the laity, namely, the investment of the priest's voice with additional power during pastoral care initiatives and the rise of lay-centered religious movements that speak to an emerging proto-Protestant mindset. Taken together, the chapters of this book progress from demonstrating a naïvely orthodox view of the perfect power of the divine voice in hypothetical settings, through an anxiety over how the divine voice was produced by priests and received by lay people in more realistic contexts, and on to a subversive investment in the lay voice as a conduit for God's speech despite the clergy's authorized claim to it. Thus, this book tells a story of power, anxiety, and subversion centered on the divine voice, which, as I will show, functioned as an avatar for spiritual as well as mundane power relationships.

The medieval texts that I study speak to "ventriloquism" in its traditional sense, the mediation of the divine voice. This "divine" voice, however, was pagan, so in the early church commentators' writings the word had a derisive meaning. In denigrating heretical or errant speech,

they juxtaposed the ravings of pagan pseudo-prophets with revelations that came from God's mouth. For these writers, ventriloquial divinations derived from oracles and errant human media epitomized pagan depravity. One pagan oracle, the *pythia*, was particularly offensive. Originally known as the *engastrimythos*, a term carried over into Latin as "ventriloquist" (belly-speaker), the *pythia* was so-called after the site where Apollo killed the Python, a place where prophecies—perhaps fumes that allegedly could intoxicate animals—arose from fissures in the ground. Sexualized accounts of the *pythia*'s revelations describe her as the bride of Apollo and speculate that her prophecies were the result of her impregnation by the god. In early Christianity, this fable had deeper implications as the *pythia*'s genitals were identified as the source of her prophecies.¹ A nuanced depiction of the *pythia* by the early Christian writer John Chrysostomos (ca. 347–407) discloses how she threatened Christian orthodoxy:

This same Pythoness then is said, being a female, to sit at times upon the tripod of Apollo astride, and thus the evil spirit ascending from beneath, and entering the lower part of her body, fills the woman with madness, and she with disheveled hair begins to play the bacchanal, and to foam at the mouth, and thus being in a frenzy, to utter the words of her madness. I know that you are ashamed and blush when you hear these things: but they glory in both; in the disgrace and in the madness which I have described.²

Chrysostomos is clearly troubled by the prophet's femaleness, which adds to his shame in recounting her legend. The *pythia*'s sexuality is even more important in another famous Christian renunciation of her that appears in the *Contra Celsum* by Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254), who commented on the oracle thus:

Of the Pythian priestess—the oracle that seems to be more distinguished than the others—it is related that while the prophetess of Apollo is sitting at the mouth of the Castalian cave she receives a spirit through her womb; after this she utters oracular sayings, supposed to be sacred and divine. Consider, then, whether this does not indicate the impure and foul nature of that spirit in that it enters the soul of the prophetess, not by open and invisible pores which are far purer than the womb, but through the latter part which it would be wrong for a self-controlled and sensible man to look upon, or, I might add, even to touch.³

Given how the *pythia* would speak whenever "she received a spirit through her womb," her delivery of oracles from Apollo seemed a base parody of

the Virgin Mary's birth of the Word. Indeed, we can see a similarity in the two stories, as the virgin birth resulted from the Annunciation; God's speech mediated by the angel impregnated Mary. The *pythia's* speech was thus threatening to the Incarnation itself and must be decried.

The *pythia* was but the most famous of many ventriloquists in the ancient world who "spoke" through their bellies, their joints, the ground in front of them, or through an idol using a tube known as an autophone. To denounce such perverse performances, the early Christian Fathers established criteria for legitimate speech by insisting that, as Stephen Connor has noted, "speech from the mouth and the head was the image of the divine Word, while speech from elsewhere in the body, or speech that did not proceed from and through the mouth, was a monstrous, misbetting of speech, and a vicious parody of the Word."⁴ This standard for Christian speech established in the early church—speech coming from the mouth—has not received due critical attention from medievalists. All of the religious speech that I study in this book has its ultimate origin in God's mouth, so it is no surprise that I inquire into the human mouth's capability for conveying speech coming *de ore Domini*.

Context for medieval exegetes' interest in mouth-speech as a standard for sacred vocal performances can be found in Biblical stories about ventriloquists, namely, the Witch of Endor and the Baal prophets. The story of the Witch of Endor revolves around a famous episode in which Saul wished to conjure the wise Samuel through the witch's ventriloquial mediation. Saul had been a staunch opponent of necromancers. Yet, upon hearing the news from the prophet who anointed him that he would die in battle with the Philistines, he consulted with his former adversary, the Witch of Endor. She claimed to summon the spirit of Samuel from out of the ground, clearly a nonoral, spurious source of divine revelation. Saul did not see Samuel as did the witch but heard his prediction: "Cras autem tu et filii tui mecum eritis" ("Tomorrow you [Saul] and your sons will be with me").⁵ This comes to pass, presumably, when Saul dies in battle and thus is punished for consulting a medium.

This event was interpreted by various early Jewish and Christian commentators,⁶ who raised a number of questions about the episode: When Saul "hears" Samuel, whom does he hear: the witch, a demon, or Samuel? Does a demon actually inhabit the witch, who is identified in the Vulgate as "*mulier habens pythone*"?⁷ Are we to understand that the witch was successful? If so, did Samuel himself appear, or was he only present in his voice?⁸ Ultimately, the opinions of these Jewish and Christian commentators took three basic forms: Samuel was indeed resurrected by the witch; either Samuel or a demon appeared at God's command; or a demon deceived Saul and gave him a forged prophecy, which means that

Samuel's resurrection at Endor was delusive.⁹ More worrisome than any of these scenarios is how Samuel's prophecy anticipates the words that Christ spoke to the Good Thief on the cross: "[A]men dico tibi hodie mecum eris in paradiso" ("Today you will be with me in Paradise").¹⁰ When read vis-à-vis Christ's speech on the cross, the Witch of Endor's performance not only ventriloquizes it but also anticipates it, such that Christ's verbal performance has been so removed from its original source in his mouth that it seems but a copy of an errant master performance, an idea that I will discuss in this book's second unit on "Anxiety."¹¹

In a similar yet different way from the Witch of Endor, the Baal prophets were also ventriloquial media that posed a threat to the source of the divine voice. In the Hebrew book of Jeremiah, ventriloquism is proscribed because pagan media feign divine revelation and thus attempt to usurp the power of God's voice. These pagan ventriloquists bring into relief an important aspect of ventriloquial performances, namely, the distinction between illegitimate ventriloquism (which fakes a divine source) and legitimate ventriloquism (which faithfully renders it). Jeremiah distinguishes illegitimate ventriloquial speech from speech that comes from God, who himself decries the false prophets who divine through oracles: "Prophetabant in Baal et decipiebant populum meum Israel" ("They have prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray").¹² Jeremiah goes on to convey God's warning about such fabrications: "[E]xcituum nolite audire verba prophetarum qui prophetant vobis et decipiunt vos visionem cordis sui loquuntur non de ore Domini" ("Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds and not *de ore Domini* [italics added]").¹³ As Jeremiah reveals, the pagans' ventriloquial speech fakes its source. It purports to be divine, yet derives from human ingenuity, not from God's mouth. Aware that the sources of their speech are bogus, these false prophets proceed to attribute their revelations to God, who responds by saying "Ecce ego ad prophetas ait Dominus: qui adsumunt linguas suas et aiunt dicit Dominus" ("I am against the prophets who wag their tongues and yet say, 'the Lord declares'").¹⁴ This passage from Jeremiah reveals how a phony prophet could attempt to arrogate the role of divine messenger. Since the alleged prophecies are privately "disclosed" to the prophet, he or she can fake them and, in doing so, assign a specious source to the divine voice. Although the distinction between the two types of revelation is clear for Jeremiah, the question of what constitutes legitimate divine revelation in medieval texts is not so simple. This book plays with the boundary of this distinction made by Jeremiah, as we often see the clergy (i.e. "legitimate" sources) incorrectly convey the divine voice and lay people (i.e. "illegitimate" sources) aptly mediate it.

Thus, in appraising the validity of a ventriloquial performance, I account for variables other than source, such as authority and intention.

In addition to speech coming from the mouth, optimally, *de ore Domini*, I also account for two other important models for Christian discourse that medievalists have studied: the Word and silence. Edwin D. Craun shows that the Word became a touchstone for salvific speech in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council, which focused on naming, teaching, and extirpating verbal sins. These sins of the tongue exemplified uses of the voice—such as backbiting, lying, blaspheming, swearing, putting on or viewing perverse entertainment—that did not ultimately derive from the Word.¹⁵ My study of divine ventriloquism not only accounts for circumstances in which the Word was mediated by humans but also ways in which it could lose its authority, such as through errant preachers who rendered it incorrectly either by accident (such as by using spurious sources for their homilies) or for personal gain (as is the case with Chaucer's notorious churchmen). Thus, as priests came to be the designated purveyors of the Word to instruct the laity, a cultural anxiety grew about the Word's etiolation due to corrupt ventriloquism.

Along with the Word, we observe in medieval writings on the sins of the tongue the promotion of silence as a deterrent to and remedy for perverse speech. The most famous example of silence's significance to religious discourse is that which filled the monasteries, where it safeguarded the religious subjects against uttering wicked speech and, perhaps more importantly, provided a condition in which God's voice could resound. In this book, I focus on another type of silence that has escaped the notice of literary scholars entirely: the silence that was observed during the Mass's Canon, the liturgy's second part that consisted of 12 Eucharistic prayers, including the consecration.¹⁶ While literary scholars have attended to the fact that the Mass was in Latin, they have overlooked the fact that much of it—about half—was in silence.¹⁷ This silence was the reason why the priest elevated the transubstantiated host, a practice that began locally in the late 12th century and was widespread in the 13th after the Fourth Lateran Council reaffirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation; since the priest consecrated the bread silently, the people needed to be cued that this miracle had taken place by the elevation and, in some churches, the sacring bell. Interestingly, even though the Canon was inaudible to the laity, it was essential that the priest spoke its words and not just skim over these prayers even though they were silent. So even this silence sponsored an example of divine ventriloquism, that is, the priest's recitation of the formula Christ spoke at the Last Supper. As I will discuss later in this introduction, many reasons were offered for keeping the Canon silent, one of the most important of which was to protect its words from

vulgarization by the laity. Under this provision, silence guarded sacred language from popular corruption, yet, in doing so, admitted the vulnerability of sacred speech to ventriloquism by vulgar speakers, allowing them the license for subversion that I discuss in this book's third unit.

When considering these ancient and medieval standards for divine speech conveyed in ventriloquial performances, an important question arises: how did medieval people themselves understand the notion of ventriloquism? Did they have a precise word for it as ancient people did, *pythia*? Part of the reason I chose to focus on the English tradition was because of how "ventriloquism" and its variants are used in the Anglo-Saxon period through the Early Modern, when the word itself has its first recorded usage. Informed by the pagan model, Reginald Scot speaks of "ventriloquy" in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584): "A wench, practising hir diabolically witchcraft and ventriloquie." Given Scot's skepticism over the existence of witches, he clearly means to demystify the practice, an impulse that we see in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*'s use of the word "ventriloquism" (1797): "It is with no great propriety that...their art [is called] 'ventriloquism,' since they appear more frequently to speak...from the roof or distant corners of the room, than from their own mouths or their own bellies." Although other early occurrences of the word are more seemingly less biased as they simply refer back to ancient oracular practices, all of them invoke the term's pagan past and do not account for common forms of the voice's mediation. For example, in his study of ventriloquism, Connor uses the term to describe the voice playing through a phonograph or sounding through a telephone. Today, in 21st-century literary studies, we use the term "ventriloquize" to mean a speaker's appropriation of another's voice and its constituent agency, usually without intending to invoke ancient religious practices. The term "ventriloquism"'s long-standing affiliation with ersatz pagan prophecies is perhaps why we do not see it used in medieval literature, which was focused on divine revelation of a different sort. When Scot used it, it was most likely an inkhorn term, the product of a more literate culture. Medieval people understood the basic concept of ventriloquism, which they often defined as Christian and divine despite the term's literal association with questionable pagan prophecies. The mediation of a god's voice became resignified as the mediation of God's voice.

In the absence of a medieval term for "ventriloquism" emerged two notions of the term that speak to both to its taboo pagan origins and also a Christian revision of these. In the Anglo-Saxon period, we find Aldhelm using the term *phitonissa* as synonymous with *helrunan* (pythoness), which appears in the works of the *Beowulf*-poet and Ælfric, who devoted a whole homily to the Witch of Endor. In addition, we find *hægtesse* (pythoness)

used elsewhere in Ælfric and in an Anglo-Saxon glossary. All of these terms refer to women who engage in nefarious religious practices, as the Anglo-Saxon writers surely envisioned the *pythia* doing. In fewer incarnations, we find the historical personage of the “Phitonissa” (pythoiness) in Middle English texts, for example, in Chaucer’s *The Friar’s Tale* and *The House of Fame*, Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, and Wyclif’s “Apology for Lollard Doctrines.” In the Old and Middle English corpus, the word that best captures the type of ventriloquism on which I am focusing is the kenning “*reordberend*,” “speech-bearer.” This term literally means “humans” but in their voiceful aspect. The word appears eight times in the Old English corpus, always in religious poetical texts that use it in some type of eschatological context, a trend that I will discuss in [Chapter 2](#). It suggests that the voice functions as an immortal soul or spirit that emanates from a divine being, an attribute that Aristotle proposed. I study the connection between the voice and the soul in this book’s first unit, which treats texts that describe fantastic religious scenarios and thus posit the voice’s fabulous power. But the word *reordberend* implies that humans are merely organs for voices that they are “borrowing” and thus are ventriloquists. This curious Anglo-Saxon word in fact speaks to a common idea: that all human beings are, in a sense, ventriloquists as they are media for the God-given voice, a concept I will discuss later in this introduction.

So while the medieval people did not use the word “ventriloquism” per se, they did have a figurative concept of the term as I define it: mediation of the divine voice through humans. The Judeo-Christian God’s fundamental orality that I address in this book has been recognized by Walter Ong and the noted phenomenologist Don Ihde: he is an oral god who speaks as opposed to writes,¹⁸ who reveals himself in his voice while remaining invisible,¹⁹ and who created the entire universe with his voice.²⁰ In turn, all speech is imagined to contain a divine element because the voice is the means by which God not only relates to but also created humans. On the subject of the divine gift of speech, the communication theorist Jacques Ellul elaborates further: “[I]t is because the Word and creation share a common nature that the speaking creator gives language to humanity, as his counterpart.”²¹ The divine voice’s originality has further implications for human subjects. Metaphysicians such as Aristotle and Hegel have linked the voice with an immortal soul or divine spirit.²² As I have mentioned, Aristotle famously alleged in *De Anima* that the voice pertains to entities that have souls and that nothing without a soul has a voice.²³ In his philosophical history of deafness and the sense of hearing, Jonathan Rée points out that the voice’s connection to the soul was advocated heartily by early deaf educators who argued

that the deaf needed to speak, not just to sign. These so-called oralists contended that the voice was nothing less than “an emanation from that very spirit, which God breathed into man’s nostrils when he created him a living soul.”²⁴ The ineluctable connections between the Judeo-Christian God and his voice and the voice and the soul outlined by these scholars resonates with this book’s central argument: that ventriloquizing the divine voice in medieval devotional settings was nothing less than brokering in divine power.

Medieval Christianity also inherited a tradition of audible divinity in Christ’s association with oral performances, particularly the portrayal of his Incarnation as a vocal act, which informs his identity as the Word.²⁵ Christ’s Incarnation is itself, strictly speaking, a ventriloquial act, as he emanates as the Word from the body of the Virgin Mary, an idea that I will address in [Chapter 5](#). The ventriloquial nature of Christ’s Incarnation is apparent in early Christian commentator’s objections to the *pythia*, whose pagan ravings were produced when she was inhabited by the god Apollo, which, as I have pointed out, must have struck early Christian commentators as a vulgar parody of Christ’s Incarnation. A less mysterious way of perceiving Christ’s relationship to the voice is in the ventriloquial performances that he inspired, that is, the preaching derived from his words in the Gospels. In the homiletic performances that this book addresses, we see divergent ways of characterizing preachers’ ventriloquism of Christ’s words. Some texts give witness to an orthodox view of Christ’s words being perfectly transmitted by their human media, while others exhibit an anxiety that his voice can be poorly rendered or poorly received, thus creating an epistemological crisis about the divine voice’s origins and fidelity.

The verbal performance by Christ to which I will attend in my last three chapters is the one that transpired at the Last Supper. These chapters present the most nuanced ventriloquial performance—as the priest was thought to adopt the persona of Christ by speaking his words during the Eucharistic portion of the Mass. As I have mentioned, the priest’s ventriloquism of Christ’s words at the Last Supper was kept in silence from the lay people during the Canon, the practical reason being to safeguard these formulas from vulgarization. This book shows how lay people could in fact appropriate or subvert this Eucharistic performance to accrue power for themselves despite institutional attempts to foreclose their participation in this part of the ceremony.

In order to understand fully the implications of this ventriloquism of the Eucharistic prayers, some historical background is necessary.²⁶ The exact origin of the Canon’s silent recitation is disputed by scholars. Carlos A. Lewis points out in his study of the Canon’s silence that early

evidence for it can be found in Origen's comment that "sacred mysteries" should be reserved for the priest.²⁷ The liturologist Dom Gregory Dix associates the Canon's silence with Gregory the Great's (ca. 540–604) momentous stereotyping of it, an act that entailed or led to the Canon's silent recitation in order to preserve its "canonical" words from popular corruption.²⁸ Adrian Fortescue argues that a remark by the emperor Justinian (ca. 482–565) about the Canon's silent recitation is evidence that the practice had already begun in Eastern churches.²⁹ Geoffrey G. Willis looks to evidence from liturgical books in proposing that the silent recitation was practiced in Rome on certain occasions by 750 though not routinely until the ninth century, at which point other regions adopted the custom.³⁰ Yet, he also interprets the late-seventh-century practice of putting up curtains (*tetravela*) around the altar at Rome as early evidence of the Canon's definitive secrecy as well as its silent performance.³¹ This custom calls to mind the Old Testament practice of having only the priest enter the *sanctum sanctorum*. Indeed, the silent Canon works according to a similar logic, as it galvanized the priest's authority over the lay people as a chosen witness to divine mysteries, which resonates with this book's central argument that the clergy were institutionally invested with the power to speak for God. So although we observe throughout the era that this book studies that piety was putatively becoming more lay-centered as pastoral care initiatives burgeoned and emphasized the role of preaching and confession, the lay people were excluded from the Mass's most sacred part for most of the Middle Ages until the Protestant Reformation and, in Catholic devotion, Vatican II.

The practical reason for their exclusion can be found in *The History of the Mass*, a manual that circulated with *The Golden Legend*. Printed by William Caxton, this text includes a cautionary tale about the Canon's required silent performance that is also found in the liturgical commentaries of Pseudo-Alcuin (ca. 735–804), Honorius (d. 1151), Jean Belet (fl. 1135–82), and Pseudo-Hugh de St. Victor (fl. 1160's).³² According to *The History of the Mass*, when the Canon was recited aloud, a group of shepherds learned it and said it in their fields. The shepherds thus used their knowledge of the Canon to perform a mock Mass, reciting the transubstantiation formula successfully over a piece of bread. For their transgression, the shepherds were struck by lightning, but not before they succeeded in turning this bread into "flesh." The practical relevance of this legend is spelled out by the tract's author: because of the shepherds' unfortunate performance, these words should be said silently, and no one should say them except a priest.³³ Indeed, we see the cultural anxiety about the transubstantiation formula becoming widely known in the magical formula ascribed to witches, "hocus pocus," which, according to Jesse Shieldlower, an Editor

at Large of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, may be a corruption of “*hoc est corpus meum*.”³⁴ This gloss on the singing-shepherd story speaks to how the priest’s ventriloquism of the sacred formula in silence worked to protect not only the integrity of liturgical formulas but also clerical power.

Various other explanations for the Canon’s silence were offered by liturgical commentators. Lothar of Segni (1161–1216), who would become Pope Innocent III and convene the Fourth Lateran Council, compared the silence of the Canon to that of the prayers that Christ said privately to God while in Gethsemane. William Durandus’s (ca. 1237–1296) theory behind the Canon’s silence was the human incapacity to understand divine secrets: “It [the Canon] is called ‘the secret’ because these things are hidden from us, since human reason can by no means fully grasp so great a mystery. To signify this, it is rightly performed in a secret voice.”³⁵ A more practical reason underlies the explanation given by the early fourteenth-century authority of canon law Johannes Andreas, which was reiterated in the mid-fifteenth century in William Lyndwood’s *Provinciale*³⁶: “Ne impediatur populus orare” (so it [the service] might not impede the people’s prayers).³⁷ While this last provision may sound like institutional posturing, it in fact speaks to the phenomenon that I explore in this book’s final unit on “Subversion,” in which I argue for the significance of lay private liturgical prayer.

In order to appreciate the gravity of lay people subverting the priest’s performance of the Canon, we should recognize the institutional efforts to ensure its proper recitation. Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1175–1253), for example, was just one of many bishops who mandated that the Mass’s Canon should be said “correctly and with proper ceremony.”³⁸ Statutes from various other dioceses reminded celebrating priests to pronounce the Canon’s words “distinctly” (“*distincte*”)³⁹ or “completely and in tact” (“*plene et integre*”).⁴⁰ The statutes for the London diocese reflect even greater scrupulosity in the stipulation that should a priest omit part of the Canon by accident (“*per negligentiam*”), he would have to go back to its beginning and start over.⁴¹ Collectively, these directions for celebrating priests suggest that some priests rushed their recitation or even skipped over parts of the Canon; since it was silent, only they would recognize that the performance was errant. While these instructions do not remark on the Canon’s silence per se, they do address a central purpose behind it: to safeguard the Canon’s words, thus to keep them canonical. Miri Rubin interprets a direction in the *Secreta sacerdotum* of Henry of Hesse (d. 1397) to say the Canon distinctly as meaning that the priest should utter it “neither too slowly nor too fast, and only in a measured tone.”⁴² In actuality, these directions were meant to guarantee that the Canon was said *at all*: clearly and completely, even if only the priest would know otherwise.

This issue of canonicity elicited a rare comment on the silent Canon from John Wyclif (ca. 1325–1384), who questioned the concerted effort to preserve its specific words. Wyclif downplayed the importance of the words themselves (*verba ipsa*) in alleging that it was, in fact, God's say-so (*verbo Dei*) that effected the sacramental change.⁴³ According to Wyclif, the consecration's exact words could not be that essential since the evangelists themselves each used different words and even wrote in different languages.⁴⁴ In light of his views on religious worship as well as Eucharistic theology, Wyclif's ideas on the Canon's formula both disclosed his discomfort over the clergy's misdirected focus on ritual and also articulated his critique of the power constituent to their privileged knowledge of the Canon's particular words. In this book's last three chapters, we see how the silent Canon emblemized Wyclif's complaints with conventional ritual and the clerical power that it entailed yet offered the lay people an opportunity for appropriating and subverting this power, which Wyclif probably would have endorsed.

The importance that medieval subjects placed on listening to God's or Christ's voice suggests a particular type of sensory devotional experience, one that underpins my examination of the ventriloquized voice and the power constituent to it. Implicit in this book is a reevaluation of the influential Pauline idea that faith comes through listening (*fides ex auditu*), a notion that resonates with Paul's extensive preaching mission. In each chapter of my study, the pervasive line of inquiry is what type of devotional experience is cultivated by listening to the divine voice. Although medieval texts also portray divine revelation as transpiring through vision, listening entails a different sort of religious experience. The differences between the experiences of hearing and listening are summed up in what Jonathan Sterne calls the "audiovisual litany," which I offer here in full:

- hearing is spherical; vision is directional;
- hearing immerses its subject; vision offers perspective;
- sounds come to us, but vision travels to its object;
- hearing is concerned with interiors; vision is connected with surfaces;
- hearing involves physical contact with the outside world; vision requires distance from it;
- hearing places us inside an event; seeing gives us perspective on the event;
- hearing tends toward subjectivity; vision tends toward objectivity;
- hearing brings us into the living world; sight moves us toward atrophy and death;

- hearing is about effect; vision is about intellect;
- hearing is primarily a temporal sense; vision is primarily a spatial sense;
- hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world; vision is a sense that removes us from it.

While I do not share Sterne's goal of interrogating these received pieties about the senses *per se*, I do examine issues inspired by his audiovisual litany. Most importantly, I interrogate the well-versed notion that the voice connotes a speaker's presence, an idea that itself carries with it the unacknowledged weight of a two-thousand-year Christian tradition, which advocates the notion that God makes himself present in his voice and thus promotes the significance of the sense of hearing to salvation.⁴⁵ Questions that I myself raise about the divine voice, questions that have implications for all voices, include: Can the divine voice be successfully appropriated by an unauthorized speaker? If so, what is its relationship to its original source? How is the divine voice "played back" in devotional scenes? Is it affected by imperfect renditions of it? By too wide availability? What is the relationship between the divine voice and sacred written texts that imply vocal performances?

In its examination of the fundamental nature of the voice by way of its study of divine ventriloquism, this book makes an important critical intervention. The majority of studies on the voice have pertained to the technological era, when the voice was first "liberated" from its source in the speaker's body and ventriloquially mediated by various "talking machines" such as the phonograph and the telephone.⁴⁶ This book shows that medieval subjects were also culturally invested in how the voice was reproduced by human speakers and apparatus. They were particularly interested in the ventriloquial act, in which the divine voice itself could be channeled by human media, thus imbuing them with power. In [chapters 1 and 3](#), I appeal to modern inventions and contemporary "sound theory," which I invoke implicitly throughout the book, to explain the implications of the divine voice's ventriloquism. Though anachronistic, I do this because so much of the work that has been done on the voice attends to the technological era. In its use of scholarly works on the voice's use in the technological era, my book thus takes an innovative approach toward medieval texts.

I also draw upon and contribute to the various ways in which medievalists have conceived of the voice. Most helpful to my study have been scholarly works that examine the significance of verbal performances in devotional scenes, on which I also focus. Mary Carruthers, Joyce Coleman, Eric Jager, and Christopher A. Jones have explored the voice's

use in the scene of reading.⁴⁷ Craun's study of post-Lateran preaching has been useful in shaping my understanding of the concerted impetus to invigorate the priest's voice. Karma Lochrie's work on confessional secrecy has enabled me to apprehend how the priest's voice was used in that particular performance. Lochrie, however, does not attend to the most pervasive form of clerical secrecy, the silent Eucharistic Canon. But her use of a Foucaultian framework to explore the power that the priest's voice accrued in secrecy has enabled my own comprehension of how power and secrecy coexist in the priest's performance of the silent Canon. No literary scholars, in fact, have written on the silent Canon, so my work on this performance draws upon historical sources, histories of the Mass written by Dix, Fortescue, Josef A. Jungmann, Lewis, and Willis. None of these scholars has attended so closely as I do to speakers' and audience members' lived experience of various vocal devotional performances.

In evaluating the experience of using and hearing the voice in medieval devotion, this book questions and revises the dominant critical narrative that has contrasted medieval piety with Reformed devotion by identifying each with a human sense: medieval piety with vision, Protestant worship with listening. Indeed, medieval literature has been distinguished from Reformed culture for its iconocentric basis, as opposed to the Reformation's focus on auditory experiences and "earwitnessing." The vernacular religious texts and preaching initiatives promoted by the Reformers also had a great, albeit different, meaning for medieval performers and audiences who believed they were giving witness to the divine voice. As we will see, while the divine voice was a tool for promoting orthodoxy and clerical power, in the late Middle Ages it would become a means of subversion in texts that portray lay devotion in a way that foreshadows its role in proto-Protestant piety.

Because the topic of the divine voice would prove too broad as a comprehensive study, I designed these chapters to be a series of penetration points that each investigates a specific way that medieval subjects heard and communicated the divine voice, be it God's or Christ's. In [chapter 1](#), "The Talking Dead," we observe "ventriloquism" in one of its broadest senses: a mute object attains a voice through a verbal speaker. In the *Exeter Book* riddles, objects that are normally silent can "speak" when the reader ventriloquizes their words and, more importantly, the written text's words. These riddles attest to a desire to recuperate an elusive author figure, present at the scene of reading through his voice, which, as the medieval notion of authorial "*voces paginarum*" implies, was contained in the written page. This practice of voiced reading has deeper implications in the Bible (#26 and #57), the chalice (#59), and chalice/paten (#48)

riddles, which are narrated by holy objects that represent Christ. These riddles describe scenarios in which the priest's ventriloquism of Christ's words provides a means of evoking his enigmatic presence in the Bible and the Eucharist, a curious notion that nonetheless suggests the affiliation of the voice and soul that Aristotle proposed. In these *Exeter Book* riddles, the reading voice functions as a key to the profound theological riddles about Christ's scriptural and Eucharistic presence that underlie the texts' disarming invitations to identify their speakers.

[Chapter 2](#), "Christ's Lips Move," examines the Old English life of Saint Andrew, a work in which the divine voice serves a different function yet also performs without interference. In this text, believers are distinguished from non-believers by their ability to recognize the divine voice. In their contact with the Jews and the cannibalistic Mermedonians, Christ and Andrew not only expose the uselessness of heterodox ventriloquial media that threaten the authority of the divine voice but also resignify them as Christian organs for it. Furthermore, in these vocal performances, we observe the divine voice deriving from as well as traveling back to its source, operating in what I call a "Christian vocal economy." These Christian ventriloquial performances that evoke their divine source thus guarantee the validity of all Christian media, which in Anglo-Saxon England would have meant priests ventriloquizing Christ's words in the gospel.

The degree to which this literary portrait of the voice applies to actual preaching scenarios is the subject of [Chapter 3](#), "The Master's Voice," which studies the priest's use of his voice implied in Alfred's *Hierdboc* and the sermons of Ælfric. Each of these writers portrays the priest's voice controlling religious space, including the bodies of the worshippers that listen to them. In these texts, the ventriloquial dynamic between the priest and his lay charges occurs in clerical vocal performances. While the priest's voice can induce vocal performances in the laity, namely, in the context of confession, if not used properly his voice also becomes subject to ventriloquial control by lay subjects. Given that the priest's voice is his locus of power, his voice's vulnerability to appropriation by lay worshippers is especially threatening to him. Fear of the voice's etiolation through ventriloquism is evident in the warning that priests can lose their voices, epitomized in the Old Testament caution often quoted in Old English homiletic literature: dumb dogs cannot bark. A more specific anxiety about the priest's voice pervades the works of Ælfric, who, despite and because of his investment in lay education, worries about how unlearned laymen will receive his lessons. In depicting the priest's voice as an instrument for the popular dissemination of texts, Ælfric ascribes to it the fantasies and fears found in modern discourse about the phonographic

voice, which seemed to early audiences able to magically resurrect its absent speaker yet risked losing its original association with him.

The anxiety about the clerical voice's appropriation by the laity addressed in [Chapter 3](#) underpins my discussion in [Chapter 4](#), "Cursed Speakers." My examination of *The Friar's Tale* heeds critical precedence in attending closely to the cursing scenes at its end. Contextualizing these curses within the tale's sustained investment in sacred language reveals the implications of the carter's and old woman's speech acts, in which they do nothing less than ventriloquize Eucharistic secrets. As vulgar appropriations of sacred secrets, their curses evoke late medieval cultural conversations on whether sacred discourse pertains to the "clergie" and not the "lewd" folk. Indeed, the late fourteenth century saw unprecedented clerical fears about prerogatives lost should sacred discourse become widely lay-accessible, as it would through vernacular translations of scripture. In *The Friar's Tale*, Chaucer reflects this cultural concern about the accessibility of sacred discourse in the summoner's zealous desire to learn the devil's *subtiltee*. This demonic secret represents knowledge of devotional formulas, unintelligible to lay folk because they were recited in Latin or, in the case of Eucharistic secrets, silence. In the devil's disclosure of his prize talent, his ability to change physical "*formes*," Chaucer addresses anxieties about the corruption of sacred language. In speaking to concerns about how lay ventriloquism of sacred speech would compromise it, Chaucer interrogates how—and if—such speech can retain its authority.

In [chapter 5](#), "Belly Speech," I continue exploring the relationship between profane speakers and sacred speech in my treatment of *The Summoner's Tale*. In Friar John's rendition of the Word that is meant to enhance his own flesh, this text gives witness to the mutual influence of the mouth and the belly, a circumstance that invokes the original meaning of the word "ventriloquist" (L. "belly speaker). Friar John's perverse speech evinces the tale's investigation of speech suitable to conveying divine discourse, a line of inquiry that culminates in another type of belly-speech, Thomas' gift "hyd in pryvetee" (3. 2143). Thomas' trick donation, a fart, has sparked a great deal of scholarship, which has regarded it as but an echo of the friar's own deceptive, long-winded speech. The word "*pryvetee*" and its variants, however, reveal the fart's implications for language that attempts to convey sacred mysteries. *Privee*'s scatological nuances clearly apply. Yet, in fourteenth-century England, "*pryvetee*" also described the silent portion of the Mass, a time when the priest and the people said their "privy prayers." Thus, I contend that while the fart signifies belly-speech that fails to address the divine, it also connotes a mystical language that subverts oral speech compromised by the tongue's

sins, failings epitomized in Friar John. The tale epitomizes a celebration of the lay voice, a voice undoubtedly depraved yet able to talk to God.

This literary portrait of vulgarized Eucharistic secrets segues into my examination of their performance in a live context. In [chapter 6](#), “Playing the Prophet,” ventriloquial speech transpires in the public revelation of Eucharistic secrets, namely, the act of broadcasting them on the stage. This chapter studies a drama known as the N-Town Passion Play I, in which actors speak the Eucharistic prayers, including the transubstantiation formula, normally recited in ritual silence. We can understand the possible reasons for the playwright’s decision to subvert ritual silence by looking at other texts that likewise publish it, whose authors’ intentions range from the educational to the heterodox. I argue that the playwright had orthodox intentions yet carried these out through heterodox means, as no other English play so blatantly stages the Eucharistic secrets. The play also includes an unusual staging of the transubstantiation formula when an angel appears to Christ bearing a host and chalice while he prays in Gethsemane. In this scene, the angel also speaks an elevation prayer, a text that the lay people would have recited while the host was displayed, immediately after the priest had recited the transubstantiation formula. In examining this curious scene, I attend to the play’s representation of the two sensual experiences the laity would have had during the host’s elevation—gazing upon it and vocalizing the elevation prayers—and argue that the playwright ultimately promotes a vocal form of liturgical devotion for the laity, one that belied the Mass’s silent performance.

Collectively, these chapters tell a story of medieval subjects’ changing understanding of the divine voice’s power and which human subjects could mediate it. This story has three parts, represented by the book’s progressive units. The first unit, “Powerful Fantasies of Christ’s Voice” is comprised of my study of the riddles ([Chapter 1](#), “The Talking Dead”) and the Old English life of Saint Andrew ([Chapter 2](#), “Christ’s Lips Move”). In these texts, the authors invest the ventriloquized voice with a fantastic power to convey divine presence and authority. The works that I chose—riddles and a saint’s life—are an apt point of departure for my study, as enigmatic and hagiographic texts are at the origins of literature in England, whether written or orally transmitted in Anglo-Latin or the vernacular. The riddles date from the Anglo-Latin tradition with Symphosius, who was writing in the fourth or fifth century. This genre was adopted by English Anglo-Latin writers such as Aldhelm (ca. 639–709) and Tatwine (d. 734), who wrote *ænigmata* that hearkened back to the older, continental tradition. The Old English riddles that I study innovate on this centuries’-old tradition. Saints’ lives are also among the earliest writings in Anglo-Saxon England; they are found,

for example, in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* of Bede (ca. 672—735). The saint's life that I chose, *Andreas*, dates from the fourth century in Greek and Latin texts by anonymous authors. The enigmatic and hagiographic genres have something in common essential to my study: a fantastic, imaginative context in which the transmission of the divine voice's power could be imagined as perfect with no mistakes from the priest and no appropriation by the laity. The enigmatic context provided by the riddles allows the author to portray Christ's ventriloquized voice as providing access to his person in the Bible and the Eucharist. The life of Saint Andrew includes several miracles, a staple of hagiography, each of which invests the divine voice with the awesome power to convert non-believers and even control their sacred media. In each chapter, I show that although the power of the divine voice is threatened, the various subjects that hear or transmit it—priests, lay people, Saint Andrew, the Jews, and the Mermedonians—do not succeed in disempowering it. We observe such etiolation in subsequent units, which deal more with pragmatic rather than imaginary contexts.

In this first unit that deals with the power of the divine voice, I appeal to these texts' genres because these are incontrovertible, and we have an incomplete picture of how the priest used his voice when ministering to his lay charges in preaching and celebrating the liturgy and even less information about how the laity used their voices. If Dix is correct, in Anglo-Saxon England the Canon was silent, a practice that was brought to England from Rome by Gregory's missionaries in 597.⁴⁸ But other liturologists admit that the circumstances of the Canon's performance in Rome, the alleged origin of the English practice, are uncertain. Also uncertain is how the priest used his preaching voice. Was the homily in Latin or the vernacular? Although most scholars agree that vernacular preaching in English began in the late tenth or early eleventh centuries, there is evidence that it began earlier, for example, in the homiletic life of Saint Chad. On the spot translation of a Latin homily was also a possibility. To my mind, the scenario that would have empowered the priest's voice the most would have been the one that would become conventional in England: silent recitation of the Canon (with its sacred secrets reserved just for him) and vernacular preaching (so he could influence the laity). So how do my selected texts correspond to this tentative chronology? Dating the riddles and *Andreas* is also a dicey prospect. The date of written composition for the riddles and *Andreas* is the late tenth century,⁴⁹ although it is possible that the riddles are older, as the Leiden riddle dates from the eighth century, and the language of *Andreas* suggests that it was composed in the mid-ninth century, all well before the vernacular preaching initiative of Ælfric, Wulfstan, and the Blickling

Homilist. Since dating the silent Canon, vernacular preaching, and the poetic texts is a risky venture, we should rely on what we do know about these texts: their genres. While somewhat artificial, interpreting these texts in terms of their fantastic genres and the narratives of power that they communicate provides fitting *termini a quo* for our story in order to observe how cultural changes influenced textual representations of divine ventriloquism.

The story then proceeds on to readings of texts that give witness to an anxiety surrounding the ventriloquism of the divine voice as priests came to be defined as the designated media for it. In this unit on “Anxiety and the Clerical Voice,” I study Anglo-Saxon pastoral texts by King Alfred (849–99) and Ælfric (c. 955–c. 1010) as well as Chaucer’s *The Friar’s Tale*, which give insight into a certain phenomenon, that is, the empowerment of the clerical voice. In a broader or future study of ventriloquism, one that does not focus on the particular role of the priest in ventriloquizing the divine voice, one might consider the ventriloquism implied, for example, in Anglo-Norman saints’ lives for women, to observe how the power of the divine voice is channeled in mystical speech. While these Anglo-Saxon and Middle English texts that I discuss derive from different cultural moments and thus make for, upon first blush, an odd pairing, they all give witness to a concerted cultural investment of the priest’s voice with power, which I will argue, stemmed from an ironic source: lay-centered, pastoral care, vernacular language movements, which, upon close inspection, imbued the priest’s voice with power by making his words more available to the laity. Simply put, the greater intelligibility of the priests’ voices and, by extension, God’s, rendered them more hospitable to appropriation by the laity.

Although they wrote about a hundred years apart, Alfred and Ælfric were at the tail ends of the first concerted pastoral care initiative in England. The official proliferation of local parish churches in the late tenth through eleventh centuries that concerns Ælfric was foreshadowed by the large ministers’ assimilation into—and of—secular life in taking on the responsibility of pastoral care in the mid-eighth century.⁵⁰ Indeed, we can see the growth of this initiative in looking at Alfred’s translation of Gregory’s *Regula Pastoralis* (ca. 590), which gives general advice to priests and was originally written for a late-sixth-century continental culture, and then considering Ælfric, who wrote the largest extant vernacular homily cycle for dissemination to parishes around England. One thing these pastoral texts by Alfred and Ælfric have in common is that they describe the priest’s voice as being nothing less than his avatar. Indeed, in Alfred’s translation of Gregory’s *Regula Pastoralis*, half of its chapters focused on how the priest should use his voice. And Ælfric’s

vernacular homilies empowered the priest's voice by making his sermons accessible to average lay people. We observe related yet different cultural impulses in Chaucer, who was active during the confluence of two important phenomena: the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), which promoted a renewed interest in pastoral care and would have been familiar to Chaucer through the work of Archbishop John Peckham (ca. 1230-1292) and those church officials that he influenced; and the rise of Lollardy, which, perhaps unwittingly, put purchase on the power of the priest's voice through its investment in vernacular preaching and the desire for English-language worship. Although these Anglo-Saxon pastoral texts and Chaucer's *Friar's Tale* give witness to the investment of the priest's voice with divine power, with this power comes the fear that it will somehow miscarry, a risky proposition for both the priest and the divine voice. The priest himself could err, and thus the fidelity of the divine voice would come into question. Or, the lay people, improved by the very pastoral care that initially empowered the priest's voice, could unlawfully appropriate this voice and thus arrogate to themselves its power.

This anxiety about the priest's power turns into outright subversion of it in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale* and the N-Town Passion Play I, texts that I treat in this book's third unit, "Lay Subversion in the Eucharistic Canon." Both of these texts give witness to lay-centered sympathies that border on the heterodox, sharing ideas about lay-clerical relationships that we find in the Lollards and later the Protestant Reformers. On the subject of Chaucer's religious sympathies, Alcuin Blamires, Alan J. Fletcher, Frances McCormack, and Alastair Minnis have speculated whether Chaucer was a Lollard.⁵¹ They have decided that he was not. Fletcher, however, goes so far as to say that Chaucer had a "personal investment in the culture of heresy."⁵² This makes sense, since we can easily see anticlerical, Lollard ideas in his texts. In light of his critiques of clerical power, it stands to reason that Chaucer would challenge clerical authority in the subversive scene of a lay subject appropriating the silent Canon, his response to the contemporary liturgy becoming more arcane and including the laity less. Unlike Chaucer, the N-Town playwright had orthodox motives but, like Chaucer, carried them out through unorthodox means. The N-Town Passion Play I presents the most subversive example of ventriloquism in my entire study: a lay actor adopts the role of Christ to publicly perform the Canon in the Last Supper play. N-Town is usually described as the most orthodox and religious of the cycles, so I would be reluctant to call its performance of the silent Canon "heterodox." But it is precisely its orthodoxy that makes the *N-Town* play so subversive. Here's how: the play presents the most complete and orthodox staging of the Last Supper

of any of the cycles. In achieving this completeness and orthodoxy, the playwright stages the sacred mysteries of the Mass out loud for a public audience. In the case of N-Town, its performance context is what makes it subversive, not its subject matter. I pause in calling Chaucer or the N-Town playwright “heterodox” because I do not think that they had the conscious intentions to be part of a heterodox movement. But in their representations of lay appropriation of the silent Canon, Chaucer and the N-Town playwright do anticipate the thinking of the Protestant Reformers, namely, Martin Luther. Although Protestant critiques of the Latin in the Mass are better known, Luther himself inveighed against the Canon for its content, calling it an “abomination.”⁵³ He then proceeded to publish the silent Canon in the vernacular in 1525, thus making it available to lay audiences. Given Luther’s actions, it’s perhaps best to say that Chaucer and the N-Town playwright were unconsciously proto-Protestant, subversive in their publication of secrets normally reserved for the priest, and motivated by contemporary lay-centered initiatives.

These chapters explore a wide range of vocal performances: reading, confessional, homiletic, liturgical, and dramatic. In the book’s first unit on “Power,” the ventriloquized divine voice functions as a conceit for human relationships with the divine in literary texts. In the second and third units on “Anxiety” and “Subversion,” which cover texts that account more closely for the voice’s use in actual performances, the ventriloquized divine voice also comes to connote mundane relationships between clerical speakers and lay audiences. These performances become influenced by their human media; divine speech is incorrectly rendered or appropriated by unauthorized speakers. While these chapters show a degeneration in medieval people’s estimation of divine speech, in particular, as it is rendered by the clergy, they also paint an optimistic picture of the laity’s increasingly more active role in hearing and uttering sacred speech, albeit not institutionally endorsed.

PART I

POWERFUL FANTASIES OF CHRIST'S VOICE

CHAPTER 1

THE TALKING DEAD

How could the talking objects in *The Exeter Book* riddles not impress their reading audience? Consider what happens in many of these riddles, a series of over 90 Old English poetic texts written down in the tenth century. An object or creature that normally cannot speak introduces itself in its own words, in its own voice. A tough audience (or, one that expected this enigmatic convention) might choose to overlook how marvelous it is that these objects should be able to speak, let alone speak in riddles. This prodigious talent, however, is not lost on the riddling objects themselves. Many of them self-identify foremost as sound makers, portraying themselves in terms of the curious means by which they use their voices. The *Exeter Book*'s nightingale (#8), for example, tells how it flaunts its wide vocal register: "Through my mouth, I speak in many voices, sing with modulated notes, often change my speech" (1–3a, "Ic þurh muþ sprece mongum reordum/ wrencum singe wrixle geneahhe/ heafodwope").¹ Less mellifluous yet equally engaging is the performance of the magpie (#24), which explains that it can modulate its voice to sound like other animals: "I vary my voice. Sometimes bark like a dog, sometimes bleat like a goat, sometimes shriek like a goose, sometimes scream like a hawk" (1–3, "wraesne mine stefne/ hwilum beorce swa hund hwilum blætne swa gat/ hwilum græde swa gós hwilum gielle swa hafoc"). Although the entertainment value of these speakers' performances is undeniable, their exact performance context—whether a social or an educational setting—is uncertain. Scholars have suggested that unlike the Anglo-Latin *ænigmata* by writers such as Tatwine, Eusebius, Boniface, and Aldhelm, which were intended for classroom use, the *Exeter Book* riddles were meant to entertain rather than to educate. As Andy Orchard puts it, the Old English riddles were "perhaps intended less for the classroom than for the winehall."² John D. Niles envisions a wider range of performance contexts for the *Exeter Book* riddles,

proposing that they could have had various audiences (clerical and lay), media (oral and written), and settings (the winehall or the cloister) depending on how and where they circulated.³

Although the circumstances surrounding the riddles' performance are dubious, we can discern one important effect that these texts had on their audiences if we consider how they often end, a feature that distinguishes them from their Anglo-Latin analogs. After the object has finished describing itself, it turns the tables on its audience. It now tells them to talk, commands them to say who (or what) has been addressing them.⁴ By concluding with this trick, these *Exeter Book* riddles provoke their audience to think critically about the voice, in particular, the reading voice that has just spoken for the otherwise speechless riddlers. This generic investment in the reading voice is best observed in two types of *Exeter Book* riddles: those narrated by *scriptorium* objects and those narrated by objects bearing an inscription. Like many of their fellow riddlers, these objects are ordinarily voiceless, mouthless, or otherwise silent. Yet, unlike their fellow riddlers, these objects that reflect on their association with written textuality also reflect on the particular circumstances under which they acquire a voice: when the reader vocalizes the riddle's text.

In this chapter, I examine the cooperation between the reading voice and the written text described in Old English riddles of the *Exeter Book*. In doing so, I invoke the long-standing scholarly discourse on the role of oral performances in the newly-literate Anglo-Saxon culture to explore what became of the artist's voice when it was recorded on the silent written page. These texts reflect on the fraught relationship between the artist's voice and the silent page by orchestrating a type of reading performance that I call "ventriloquial," a designation that makes sense for the simple fact that the reader who is enlisted to perform these first-person narratives lends his voice to mute objects. Like the most familiar form of ventriloquism (an act in which a performer speaks through his dummy) and the various modern inventions that operate via a ventriloquial mechanism (such as the phonograph and telephone), the ventriloquial reading performances prescribed in these riddles call attention to the experiences of using and hearing the human voice. Furthermore, in staging ventriloquial reading performances, these texts give witness to the long-standing cultural fantasy that the voice, when "stored" in writing and "played back" by a reader, can in fact evoke its absent speaker's presence, an idea both current in medieval commentaries about reading and also manifest in modern expectations for the newly invented phonograph.

We get insight into medieval notions about the voice's containment in a written text in the *scriptorium* riddles of the Bible (#26), inkhorns (#87, #92, and #17), and the bookmoth (#47), which I will discuss in the first

part of this chapter. When these riddles are performed, their first-person narratives engage the reader in lending his voice to the animals that have been killed to produce the written text. The reader's ventriloquism of their voices conjures these dead creatures and, more importantly, another departed entity integral to the text's production: the author. In having the reader voice the words of mute and remote speakers, these riddles explore a question that underpins Western metaphysics and critiques thereof: how and to what degree does the voice connote its speaker's presence? Simply put, the absent author attributes to his voice the fantastic power to make him present at the scene of reading.

In this chapter's second part, I show that the mediumistic power attributed to the reading voice has particular implications for Christian devotion, which is evident in the fact that the *Exeter Book* objects that claim to speak through their written inscriptions also happen to be sacramental items. In this part, I attend more closely to the devotional scene depicted in the riddle to gain some insight into the voice's use in Mass, albeit rendered through a fantastic lens. The Bible (#26 and #67) and chalice (#59) riddles depict a devotional reading performance in which the priest's ventriloquism of Christ's voice conveys his mysterious presence in the Word and the Eucharist. The voice's perceived ability to signify a spiritual presence also underlies the reading performance portrayed in the chalice/paten riddle (#48). In this riddle, the priest's voice represents his own soul, which he offers to God when consecrating the Eucharist. I show that these four riddles (#26, #48, #59, #67) narrated by inscribed sacramental objects attune their audience to the priest's ventriloquial performances that transpire during the liturgy, acts of ventriloquism that evoke Christ's presence. The priests mediating Christ's voice, however, are simply organs for it; its power does not reflect on them, as it will in this book's second unit on "Anxiety," which examines the priests' role as the designated medium for the divine voice. In turn, a nonclerical reader has the opportunity to usurp the clerical voice and thus Christ's but does not exceed his institutionally designated role in the fantastic scenes that these riddles depict.

Scriptorium Riddles and the Voice

My discussion of ventriloquial reading begins with *scriptorium* riddles that show the Anglo-Saxons' belief in writing as a means of recovering an absent speaker's voice. These talking *scriptorium* objects speak to a question that has interested scholars: how did the Anglo-Saxons conceive of the relationship between written and oral discourse? As Seth Lerer points out, even a casual reader cannot but notice the sheer number of *scriptorium* riddles, which seem to point to an Anglo-Saxon interest in the physical

circumstances of literary production.⁵ After reading the *Exeter Book* Bible (#26) and inkhorn riddles (#87 and #92), one might even say that the Anglo-Saxon fascination with literary practices tended toward a voyeuristic obsession with bookmaking, a process that entailed the torture and death of animals to make writing instruments. As if such carnage was not sufficiently gripping, these “snuff” riddles take guilty pleasure to a whole new level. Each of the moribund objects lends its dying voice to chronicling its unceremonious conversion into writing tools. The inkhorn (#87), for instance, tells how it was ripped from the stag’s head and thus was separated from its kin. Now, it suffers on the writer’s desk:

nis min broþor her
Ac ic sceal broþorleas bordes on ende
staþol weardian stondan fæste. (20b-22)

[My brother is not here. So, brotherless, I shall stand fast at the end of the table, hold my station.]

In a similar vein, the Bible riddle (#26) describes the gory process of bookmaking by having the animal whose skin is turned into the holy book narrate its own death:

Mec feond sum feore besnyþede
woruldstrenga binom wætte siþþan
dyfde on wætre dyde eft þonon
sette on sunnan þær ic swiþe beleas
herum þam þe ic hæfde heard mec siþþan
snað seaxes ecg sindrum begrunden. (1-6)

[Some enemy robbed me of life, stole my physical strength. Then he wet me, dipped me in water. He took me out again, set me in the sun where I quickly lost all my hair. The hard edge of the knife, ground free from dross, cut me.]

The laborious process that marks the animal’s agonizing shift from its native natural world into written culture might well chronicle Anglo-Saxon England’s own transition from its “raw” orality to a “cooked” culture of the book.⁶ But then, what becomes of oral performances once written customs have been introduced? It would seem that they too succumb to the practices pertinent to written textuality. As we see in the inkhorn riddle (#92), the mutilated creature cannot even utter a complaint about its circumstances:

siþþan mec isern innanweardne
brun bennade blod ut ne com

heolfor of hrepre þeah mec heard bite
 stiðecg style no ic þa stunde bemearn
 ne for wunde weop. (17–21)

[Afterward, the brown iron wounded me internally. No blood or gore came from my body, though the hard, strong-edged steel bit into me. I did not lament that tragic hour, nor did I weep because of the wound.]

All that is left is the written page, a silence where this oral lament might have been. Given that these *scriptorium* riddles expose the cruel truth behind literary production, they seem to give lurid credence to the phonocentric bias against writing, which purports that writing is a mark of absence and is, as these objects would attest, deadly.⁷

A lament for an Anglo-Saxon oral tradition that has fallen into desuetude after the introduction of literate textual practices is likewise manifest in the bookmoth riddle (#47), which seems to disclose how written customs have ruthlessly devoured the oral:

Moððe word fræt me þæt þuhte
 wrætlicu wyrd þa ic þæt wundor gefrægn
 þæt se wurm forswealg wera gied sumes,
 þeof in þystro þrymfæstne cwide
 ond þæs strangan stapol stælgieſt ne wæs
 wihte þy gleawra þe he þam wordum swealg. (1–6)

[The moth devoured words. It seemed to me—when I learned of that horror, a curious fate—that that insect, a thief in the dark, swallowed up the songs of some man, his illustrious speech and its strong foundation. The thievish stranger was not a whit the wiser from swallowing those words.]

Oral compositions, the songs of man (3, *wera gied sumes*) and his illustrious speech (4, *þrymfæstne cwide*), have been totally “swallowed up” (6, *swealg*) by writing. Craig Williamson reads this riddle as evidence that the oral and written traditions cannot coexist because writing will invariably engulf the spoken word, a notion that speaks to Walter Ong’s contention that a culture’s return to preliterate thinking after the introduction of written practices is impossible.⁸ What I find interesting about Williamson’s position is how he phrases it: that the bookmoth riddle evinces that writing has “supplanted” the Anglo-Saxon oral tradition.⁹ He speaks to the central idea behind the phonocentric critique of writing, that is, that writing will “supplant” what it should only “supplement.” This riddle thus means to demonstrate that “[t]he old form of memory, the rhythmical word-hoard, has given way to the material storehouse of the vellum page.”¹⁰ Williamson calls to mind a *locus classicus* of the phonocentric critique,

namely, Plato's oft-cited words: writing functions as the deadly *pharmakon* (remedy/poison) that is supposed to aid human memory but instead destroys it. While the bookmoth riddle's prognosis for the oral tradition is bleak, it does offer some solace when read as a revenge fantasy. Perhaps the repressed oral tradition retaliates against the written word when the moth uses its mouth to eat up the book. In either case, oral and literate modes of textual production seem mutually exclusive.

If we read these *scriptorium* riddles as angry laments for erstwhile oral performances that a newly literate culture would articulate, we must also concede that the *Exeter Book*-riddler bestowed speech upon these normally mute and nonhuman entities so they could chronicle the destruction wrought upon them by the procedures of literacy. One must wonder, however, whether the riddler, clearly knowledgeable about literary production and self-aware of his position in it, had a motivation for composing these texts other than berating his own craft. The interpretation of these *scriptorium* riddles that I have explained evokes the critical tradition that has read Anglo-Saxon writings as the records (at best) or the vestiges (at worst) of a glorious "oral" past rather than self-consciously literary efforts. As recent scholarship has pointed out, however, such interpretations reflect more on critical expectations than on the true workings of Anglo-Saxon discourse.¹¹ As Roberta Frank observes of the long-standing critical investment in Anglo-Saxon orality, the imaginative quest for the "original English poet" has generated him in various incarnations as well as a wealth of scholarly works on a lost oral tradition hailing from a "prescriptionsarian paradise."¹² Responding to critics who feature an Anglo-Saxon oral tradition sacrificed to the written, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe argues that Anglo-Saxon culture was one of transitional literacy in which orality and literacy were not mutually exclusive, but rather, coexisted on a continuum.¹³ Another strain of scholarship suggests that in Anglo-Saxon textuality the oral mode in fact continued to dominate the written and, thus, that Anglo-Saxon writings ineluctably betray their oral roots. Lerer responds to this standpoint by arguing that Anglo-Saxon writers' appeals to an "oral past" should be read as rhetorical, literary inventions rather than historical reportage of oral performances.¹⁴ Joyce Coleman argues that the categories of "oral" and "literate" are invalid because "oral" cultures may exhibit "literate" traits, just as "literate" cultures exhibit "oral" traits, which is seen in reading practices; even private reading was performed out loud in a subaudial whisper.¹⁵ What Frank, O'Keeffe, Lerer, and Coleman all tacitly address is the impulse to oversimplify Anglo-Saxon literature by designating "orality" its single most important influence and identifying feature, one that is decidedly opposed to "literacy." What I find limiting about the critical stances they

critique is that these take the “orality” of Anglo-Saxon culture as a given. Such thinking has caused the Anglo-Saxon fascination with the human voice and its use in oral performances to remain unexamined.

I contend that these riddles, with their linking of the speech of mute objects with the practices of literacy, offer a valuable critical opportunity: they allow us to divine how the Anglo-Saxons themselves regarded the mutual influence of orality and literacy in a written text and, as I will show in the second part of this chapter, in a devotional scene. These *scriptorium* death scenes are best read from a perspective that does not oppose oral performances and written textuality but instead sees these riddles for what they are: clever experiments with the voice. Rather than assume that *scriptorium* riddles narrate the demise of an oral tradition, I argue instead that they explore how the voice continues to exist even after its bearer does not. Quite simply, these riddles collectively pose the question, “How does the voice resound even after it should have lapsed into the silence of the written page?”

In describing writing from its chatty victim’s perspective, the Bible riddle (#26) offers an answer to this question. Appropriately enough, as it tracks an entity ambiguously present in the written text, that is, the animal made into vellum, this Anglo-Saxon riddle needs to be read *vis-à-vis* its Anglo-Latin analogs, the silent subtexts that are themselves ambiguously present. One of these is Tatwine’s riddle “*De membrano*” (#5), which describes the process of making parchment from the animal’s point of view:

Efferus exuuiis populator me spoliauit,
Vitalis pariter flatus spiramina dempsit;
In planum me iterum campum sed uerterat auctor
Frugiferos cultor sulcos mox irrigat undis. (1–4)¹⁶

[A fierce robber stripped me of my covering and also deprived me of my breathing pores. Then an artisan shaped me into a level field, whose fertile furrows the cultivator irrigates.]¹⁷

As does the *Exeter Book* Bible (#26), Tatwine’s parchment revisits its violent beginnings when the animal’s body was destroyed. What follows such a gruesome death provides the key to understanding the voice’s fate once the speaker is gone. As Eusebius’s riddle “*De membrano*” (#32) relates, after the animal is killed and turned into writing material, its skin (now parchment) acquires communicative power: “Antea per nos uox resonabat uerba nequaquam,/ Distincta sine uoce edere uerba solemus” (1–2, “Once we had no voice of any kind to say a word,/ now we proclaim words without an audible voice”).¹⁸ The riddling object poses a

paradox. The parchment still does not have an audible voice (*disincta uoce*) yet can proclaim words (*edere uerba*). How these words are “proclaimed” discloses how the voice is contained in writing: “Candida sed cum arua lustramur milibus atris;/ viua nihil loquimur, responsum mortua famur,” (3–4, “We are illuminated by thousands of black figures;/ alive we do not speak, but dead we give answers”).¹⁹ No longer a living animal that cannot speak, this “dead” parchment “give[s] answers” through the “black figures” of writing. The animal-turned-parchment reveals that it has not lost but acquired the power of speech through its death, mutilation, and physical transformation.

This voice gained by the animal’s conversion into literate apparatus in fact belongs to the text’s reader. The reader’s role in the creature’s acquisition of a voice is apparent in a subtle detail; the parchment has gone from having no voice to speaking with an inaudible one. An Anglo-Saxon audience would have associated this paradoxical vocal performance with *ruminatio*, the vocal yet subaudial private reading practiced in medieval monasteries. In *ruminatio* (L. “chewing the cud”), the reader’s use of his voice indicated his ingestion (and digestion) of the text’s words. As a comment on voiceful reading, Eusebius’s parchment riddle insinuates how the reader who ruminated on the written text as Bede described the poet Cædmon doing—“like a clean animal chewing the cud” (quasi mundum animal ruminando)—became, strictly speaking, a talking animal physically engrossed in the text.²⁰ While Eusebius’s riddle may not have been performed in a scene of ruminative reading per se, its portrait of a subaudial reading voice speaks to the notion advanced by Garrett Stewart: that the reader always vocalizes the written text—experiences its sounds and texture with his physical organs of speech—even when reading “silently” to himself, a phenomenon that is epitomized in *ruminatio*.²¹ Eusebius’s parchment riddle thus portrays the indispensability of the reader’s voice—whatever its volume—to the significance of the written text.

While the voiceful reader of the *Exeter Book Bible* (#26) and Eusebius’s parchment (#32) undoubtedly does a great service to the deceased animals by speaking for them, he also lends his voice to another shadowy entity who is intimately involved in the text’s creation: its author. In both of these *scriptorium* riddles, the chronicle of the text’s material composition is but a fable for the author’s creative composition of its words. More significantly, the author’s adoption of the talking animal as a persona—a designation for the mask used on the ancient stage to amplify the speaker’s voice—discloses his desire to broadcast his own voice in the scene of reading. Knowing that the process of medieval textual creation was dispersed among various authorial and nonauthorial entities, we might

be reluctant to ascribe to the riddles' composers a sense of autonomous textual authority, much less aspirations to a literary afterlife. Indeed, this mode of textual production resonates with poststructuralist criticism such as that of Jerome McGann, who describes reading as but another moment in the cooperative production of texts, a viewpoint that has also served to modulate the author's monolithic role.²² The medieval composer, however, would have been familiar with the ruminative model and thus would have recognized the scene of reading as an arena in which his words would resound, precisely because of the reader's key role. In fact, as Mary Carruthers points out, he himself had perhaps composed his text through an act of ruminative remembrance, which entailed his regurgitation of words he had once ingested.²³

This affiliation of the text's creation by an author and its recreation by a ruminative reader to recuperate this authorial voice is the subject of the inkhorn riddle (#17)²⁴:

Ic eom mundbora minre heorde
 eodorwirum fæst innan gefylled
 dryhtgestreona dægtidum oft
 spæte sperebrogan sped biþ þy mare
 fylle minre frea þæt bihealdeð
 hu me of hrife fleogað hyldepilas
 hwilum ic sweartum swelgan onginne
 brunum beadowæpnum bitrum ordum,
 eglum attorsperum is min innað til
 wombhord wlitig wloncum deore
 men gemunan þæt me þurh muþ fareð. (1-11)

[I am the guardian of my flock, bound fast with wires, filled inside with princely treasures. In the daytime often I spit forth terrible spears. My power is the greater the fuller I am. My master beholds how battle spears fly from my belly. Sometimes I begin to swallow black shiny battle weapons, bitter arrows, painful poison-spears. My stomach is good, a splendid "womb-hoard" dear to noble men. Men remember what passes from my mouth.]

The number of references to the inkhorn's interior is striking: *innan* (2, "from within"), *hrife* (6, "belly" or "womb"), *innað* (9, "entrails"), *wombhord* (10, "belly's contents"). As in other inkhorn riddles (#87, #92), the belly is the seat of textual production. The inkhorn's belly filled with ink evokes both the author who produces a text through ruminative remembrance as well as the reader who will eventually digest this textual production. And as does the inkwell *spæte* (4, "spit") and *swelgan* (7, "swallow") the ink, so will the reader "swallow" and "spit" out the text when verbally

recalling it.²⁵ Important to note is that this written text derives from the inkhorn's "*wombhord*" (10), a unique occurrence in the Old English corpus. This kenning echoes "*wordhord*," the oft-mentioned source of speech in Anglo-Saxon poems. "*Wordhord*," a "treasury of words," also connoted the means by which this treasury was accessed: through the oral recall of phrases recorded in memory through poetic rhythms. Retaining this sense, the word "*wombhord*" implies that a text's reproduction inhabits its production, a notion to which the inkhorn appeals in its claim that: "men gemunan þæt me þurh muþ fareð" (11, "men remember what passes from my mouth"). More aptly, men remember what passes through their own mouths when they ruminate on a written text. When the poem links the inkhorn's mouth and belly with the ruminator's mouth and belly, it tellingly connects the text's creation with its re-creation. This riddle discloses an insight into the *scriptorium* riddlers' estimations of their authority; it acknowledges that their words, when recorded in writing, would be vocally performed in future scenes of reading or composition.

Moreover, the reading performances prescribed in these riddles reflect not only on this authorial expectation but also on an aspect of the voice that it presumes, namely, its ability to represent its speaker after death. In the case of the *Exeter Book* Bible riddle (#26), the reader has witnessed—even reenacted—the speaker's graphic death. To put it plainly, the riddle's author has staged his own death, perhaps better to haunt the scene of reading. Indeed, the dead author will become the talking dead when the reader ventriloquizes his words, a performance whose full significance becomes clear when recalling the traditional sense of "ventriloquism" as the practice of conjuring the dead. In ancient pagan customs, these departed beings made their presence known through the voices that resounded in the stomach of the ventriloquist (L. "belly-speaker") who, a skeptic would argue, had himself fabricated these intestinal noises by swallowing large amounts of air.²⁶ Early church writers such as Origen (185–c. 254) and John Chrysostomos (349–407) regarded ventriloquism as the essence of pagan depravity and, in doing so, endorsed the voice's significance to human relationships with the divine. According to Christian writers, ventriloquial mediumship through an idol or oracle distorted the natural workings of the voice, which they saw as a divine gift to human beings.²⁷ Opprobrious though it was to Christian commentators, ventriloquism draws into focus an abiding assumption about the voice, namely, its ability to represent an absent, even dead-and-buried speaker.

Ventriloquism's traditional association with voices of the dead helps account, over 1,500 years later, for one of the newly invented phonograph's most widely-touted charms: that it would be able to play back voices of speakers who had died. Interestingly, after he invented the

phonograph, Thomas Edison planned another machine that would “record” what happened to an individual’s “seat of personality” after death.²⁸ Albeit hypothetical, this invention suggests that Edison himself grasped the phonograph’s eschatological implications. The phonograph’s mediumistic function in the popular imagination is famously burlesqued in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), when Leopold Bloom contemplates outfitting graves with devices that would receive messages from those who were gone—but-not-forgotten: “Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice: yes: the gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather.”²⁹ A “gramophone in every grave” would not only afford the dead an afterlife but also make it possible for the living to “remember everybody.” Although Bloom’s invention might seem but a product of his fanciful imagination, a similar affiliation of vocal technology and eschatological phenomena is evident in the contemporaneity of vocal reproduction inventions (such as the phonograph and the telephone) and the *fin de siècle* spirit-rapping craze, which was epitomized by séances in which the dead would “speak” to the living.³⁰ Like the phonograph (Gr. “soundwriter”), these *scriptorium* riddles rely on the cooperation of oral and literate creative impulses to “resurrect” the dead. When the Bible riddle’s reader lends his voice to the written record’s “black track” (*swearlast*, 12), he thus ventriloquizes the words of the animals incarnate in the parchment and, by extension, the absent author resident in his text.

In popular expectations for the phonograph, the voice’s routine movement from its speaker beyond him to his audience is exaggerated in the voice’s imaginary traffic from “beyond the grave” to an attentive living audience. This power attributed to the voice purportedly reflects an empirical observation of its routine operations; the voice derives from the speaker, has its “source” in his body, and yet can leave the speaker, that is, to reach its audience. In light of the voice’s entrenched connection with individual personhood, cultural critics have interpreted the invention of modern vocal-reproduction technology as hailing a new era in the history of sound because these inventions seemed to liberate the voice from its source in the body, allowing voices of the dead to reach their living audiences. Yet, as Jonathan Sterne points out, this phenomenon speaks less to actual technological capability than to abiding fantasies about the voice—namely, its association with personal presence—that were projected onto these inventions.

As Anglo-Saxon *scriptorium* riddles suggest, the necromantic power ascribed to the phonograph is not particular to the modern technological era and its novel contribution to the history of sound. It also underlies the medieval notion of *voces paginarum* explained by Isidore of Seville

(c. 560–636) and, after him, John of Salisbury (c. 1120–80): the text's written letters represent the voices of those not present to us.³¹ Indeed, Richard of Bury (1287–1345) would repeat this sentiment: “[I]n libros mortuorum quasi vivos invenio” (“In books, I discover the dead as if they were alive”).³² In the *vores paginarum* conceit, the author's voice is stored in his written text and resounds when the reader ventriloquizes his words, a process that anticipates the phonograph's “reading” of vocal tracks inscribed on a record. The primary impetus behind ventriloquizing the *vores paginarum*, to represent dead authors, resonates with a remark made by Charles Cros, who designed the phonograph shortly before Thomas Edison produced a working model of it. A poet as well as an inventor, Cros imagined a speaker addressing the invention thus: “You will rewrite, you will remember me.”³³ Cros's comment points to the likeness of medieval texts to modern vocal apparatus and reveals the assumptions about reading that inhabit both: reading is a practice designed to remember the text's dead composer by reproducing his voice, which resounds through the reader's mouth, be it human or phonographic.

A question then arises: how successful are these ventriloquial apparatus at “remembering” their dead creators through their resounding voices? Taking Joyce's “gramophone in every grave” as an example of the resurrection enabled by ventriloquism, the reproduced voice draws attention to the speaker's physical absence even as it is supposed to stand in for him. Joyce's gramophone poorly reproduces the great-grandfather's voice (“Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraak awfullygladseegain hellohellohello amawf krpthsth”).³⁴ Even though the fabulous machine is expected to “re-member” everybody, the disembodied voice's resurrection of its dead speaker is not wholly successful. It reflects the deceased individual's attenuated presence even as it conjures him. Likewise, the *scriptorium* objects' voices evoke their bodies only to flaunt their absence. The original living body, having died and undergone change, is only ambiguously present in the physical, written manuscript that the reader beholds. In turn, reading the *scriptorium* riddles' speakers as their authors discloses the indeterminate nature of their physical presence at the scene of reading. With both the phonograph and the *scriptorium* riddles, the patchy success of the ventriloquized voice at evoking the flesh-and-blood presence of its speaker—who perhaps only seems real and living—speaks to a paradox surrounding the voice: it can both represent and undermine its source.

Sacramental Objects and Christ's Presence

I now turn my attention to the riddles' representations of the priest's ventriloquial performances at Mass and how these evoked Christ's presence as

the *scriptorium* riddles did their dead speakers'. The *scriptorium* riddles that I have examined stage ventriloquial reading performances that evince how empirical observations about the voice's workings have been interpreted in terms of a fantastic relationship to personal presence, namely, how the voice's ability to exist beyond its speaker implies its ability to represent him once he is dead. One perspective that has fostered this long-standing cultural investment is Christian theology. As Sterne points out, the relationship between the voice and personal presence is conditioned by the "unacknowledged influence of a two-thousand-year Christian theology of listening."³⁵ The particular assumption to which Sterne refers is the conceit of divine revelation through the voice. Given that a great deal of Anglo-Saxon textual production took place in monastic *scriptoria*, it stands to reason that the *Exeter Book* Bible (#26 and #67), chalice (#59), and chalice/paten (#48) riddles would reflect a Christian interpretation of the voice's operations and, by extension, an investment in the notion of divine vocal revelation. Although the influence of Christian theology has contributed to the voice's intimate association with personal presence, I contend that it is precisely because the voice in fact has an ambiguous relationship to personal presence that it can stand for various types of religious presence, including Christ's in the Word and the Eucharist. In performing riddles that are narrated by inscribed objects, the voice serves a key function, not because of its traditional relationship to personal presence, but rather because of its vexed nature; the voice's ambiguity provokes the reader to recognize these entities as spiritually present while still apprehending their mysteriousness. Thus, in these texts, the reader speaks for the enigmatic sacred objects and, more significantly, contemplates theological riddles pertinent to Christ's mysterious presence as well as human postmortem identity. In each of these riddles, the ventriloquial act pertains to a particular devotional moment, the Mass, namely, when the priest reads the Bible and consecrates the Eucharist, practices that enlist the voice to evoke a sacred presence through the performance of written texts. As with the *scriptorium* riddles, the reader in the texts is a conduit for the power of the authorial voice yet does not quite succeed in appropriating it because, in the case of the riddles I will now discuss, this voice behind the text is ultimately Christ's and connotes his sacramental, monolithic presence.

In performing the Bible riddle (#26), the reader's use of his voice mimics the priest's since the Mass was the most likely context in which one would hear the Bible read.³⁶ What's more, most Bibles were the property of churches. This riddle explores the nature of Christ's sacred presence in scripture by insinuating Christ's voice in the animal's detailed account of the Word's Incarnation, that is, the Bible's creation from animal flesh.

Although the specifics differ, the animal's meditation on its bodily suffering imitates Christ's Passion: it is cruelly tortured and killed. Given that the riddle is spoken by the Bible, one medium in which Christ is supposed to be present, we are invited to read the talking Bible's words as Christ's. After this Passion, the animal inhabits the gloriously decorated text, which symbolizes Christ's resurrected body as well as the immortal Word Incarnate. For its use of a first-person voice that simulates Christ's, the Bible riddle calls to mind yet another voyeuristic account of the Passion delivered by an inanimate yet talkative entity, *The Dream of the Rood*. Indeed, the rood's personal reflection on the Passion sounds like it could be Christ's; it not only witnesses but also claims to share in Christ's experience:

Purhðrifa hi me mid deorcan næglum. On me syndon þa dolg gesiene,
 opene inwidhlemmas. Ne dorste ic hira nænigum sceððan.
 Bysmeredom hie unc butu ætgædere. (46–8)³⁷

[They penetrated me with dark nails. On me the wounds are seen,
 open, nasty wounds. I dared not scathe any of them. They tortured us
 both together.]

Of this passage, Barbara Raw writes: "Like the martyrs, the cross of *The Dream of the Rood* owes its power of intercession to its imitation of Christ, in sharing his death on the cross. Like Christ, it still bears the marks of the nails."³⁸ Its identification with Christ contributes to the poem's rhetorical power and, more importantly, suggests the close relationship between the rood and Christ's body in Anglo-Saxon religious devotion that Thomas D. Hill points out.³⁹

The poem also draws an association between the rood and Christ in the rood's chronicle of its various changes. *The Dream of the Rood's* first-person narrative enlists the poem's reader in ventriloquizing this chronicle, which covers its origins as a tree in the forest, its suffering, burial, resurrection, and eventual adoption as a devotional sign. The rood's voice is its only feature that does not change and thus suggests an enduring essence. In the *Exeter Book* Bible riddle (#26), the first-person voice also serves as a sign of lasting presence; the voice persists despite its speaker's death and radical physical transformation from a living creature into a Bible. A reader who recognized that this chronicle about Bible-making sounds like Christ's personal account of his Passion might well consider how the Christ-like voice that he ventriloquizes is supposed to suggest Christ's immortal presence in the Word.

After the Bible riddle (#26) evokes Christ in this passionate account, it describes a scene of scriptural reading. This narrative shift encourages

the reader to reflect on Christ's presence in devotional scenes of reading, which is ultimately more important than the reader's capacity to mediate it, be he the riddle's reader or the priest reading the Bible at Mass. The Bible's ornate decoration implies that this is indeed a book used at Mass: "nu þa gereno ond se reada telg/ ond þa wuldorgesteald wide mære/ dryhtfolca helm" (15–17a, "Now may those ornaments and the red dye and the glorious treasures proclaim the protector of the people far and wide"). The riddle's attention to the talking facets of the written text brings to mind the *vores paginarum* conceit, whereby the reader's voicing of the text's letters conjures its absent author. While the Bible's vocal performance does not ventriloquize Christ's words per se, it does identify him as the subject of this text ("the protector of the people") and the reason for its dissemination. This riddle thus reflects on the priest's public performance of scripture, in which the voice signifies a means and metaphor for Christ's pervasive presence, albeit mysterious.

The manifestation of Christ's scriptural presence in vocal reading is examined more fully in another *Exeter Book* Bible riddle (#67). This riddle first describes an act of scriptural reading and then involves its reader in one. It begins from the perspective of a listener who hears the priest reading the Bible at Mass:

Ic on þinge gefrægn þeodcyniges
 wrætlice wiht wordgaldra
snyttro swa hio symle deð
 fira gehwam (1–4)

[I have heard of a wondrous creature speaking wisdom with the power of charmed words in the court of the King of nations, as it always does to every man.]

While the listener in this imagined scenario hears the Bible read by a priest at the conventional devotional scene of the Mass, he attributes to the Bible the power "of charmed words" (*wordgaldra*, 2). Given that the word "*galdor*" in Old English writings usually refers negatively to magical charms, an Anglo-Saxon audience might have recognized this "charmed speech" as pagan. The exact meaning of "*wordgaldra*," a word that is unique to this riddle, is itself ambiguous since the text surrounding it is illegible. The ensuing description of this power of charmed words, however, discloses that it is indeed pagan, that is, evocative of traditional ventriloquial practices. This creature speaks even though it does not have a mouth (6, *nænne muð hafað*) or, for that matter, feet or feathers (7, *fet ne fipru*), in short, a corporal form that could naturally produce a voice. This performance in which a disembodied speaker's voice resounds through

a medium's mouth (here, the priest's) calls to mind the most familiar example of pagan ventriloquism, that is, the Delphic oracle erected at the site where Apollo killed the Python. To early Christian writers, the *pythia* who uttered divine words whenever she "receive[d] a spirit through her womb" seemed a blasphemous rendition of the virgin birth of the Christian Word.⁴⁰ In his portrait of the Bible's magical speech, the Bible riddle's author surely did not mean to invoke these ancient ventriloquial customs *per se*. He nonetheless inadvertently discloses that ventriloquial mediumship in its broadest sense ineluctably underlies divine revelation through human discourse. The success of this ventriloquial mediumship is evident in Christ's presence that is conjured through the priest's vocal performance of the scriptural Word in "the court of the King of nations," that is, at Mass.

In the Bible riddle (#67), the significance of ventriloquism to Christ's scriptural presence becomes apparent when the riddle's reader is enlisted to speak for the Bible itself. As with the other Bible riddle (#26), this verbal performance of reading the Bible riddle mimics the priest's act of reading the Bible at Mass. In [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#), I describe ventriloquial performances in which lay people usurp the power of the priest's voice and, in doing so, can even challenge church doctrine. No such anxiety inhabits the scenes described in these two riddles, which mean instead to impress upon their audience that Christ could be made present by reiterating his words in the Bible.

After describing the scene of scriptural reading and the ventriloquism that transpires in it, the riddle then includes a reflective quote from the holy book:

wearð

leoda lareow forþan nu longe mæg

awa to ealdre ece lifgan

missenlice þenden menn bugað

eorþan sceatas (9b–13a)

["I have become the teacher of peoples. Therefore, I now may live forever and ever in various places as long as men inhabit the corners of the earth."]

The riddle's reader has thus changed subject positions, from one who listens to scripture being read to one who reads it. This perceptual shift is meant to highlight the reader's ventriloquism of the Bible's words by distinguishing them from the narrator's (i.e., a listener's at Mass), a rhetorical move that also repositions the reader from being part of the audience at the liturgy to the priest speaking the Bible's words. In light of the

attention paid to this rhetorical act, we might ask: whose voice exactly is the reader ventriloquizing? Although the riddle's critically endorsed solution is "the Bible" or "a gospel book," the speaker's self-designation as a teacher (10, *lareow*) also suggests another illustrious entity to whom the voice could belong: Christ. Given the provocative ambiguity linking the Bible's voice and Christ's, a better solution to this riddle is perhaps "the Word," which encompasses both the physical text and Christ's mystical scriptural presence. In its brief speech, the Word refers to the performance context foregrounded in the riddle, a scriptural scene of reading. Such reading performances are in fact essential to the Word's notion of its own immortality, evident in its prediction that it will live "as long as men inhabit the corners of the earth" or, more accurately, as long as they read texts and hear them read. The Word's claim to immortality—a written disclosure framed as a vocal performance—recalls the fantasies surrounding the invention of the phonograph: that a speaker's voice can be stored in writing and, when played back by a reader, conjure his living presence. Here, the reader performs as does a phonograph: mediating rather than usurping the power of the creative, mystical entity behind it.

If the voice recorded in the Bible riddle (#67) simulates Christ's in his mystical identity as the Word, then the riddle cites Christ's personal reflection on his immortality through the reading of scripture. Perhaps better to say that the riddle's author was so eager to secure Christ's guarantee of his sustained presence through scriptural reading that he fabricated one. While earnest, the riddle's "scriptural" quote perhaps does not evoke Christ so much as the riddle's author masquerading as Christ. When interpreted thus, the Bible riddle exemplifies a concern about the voice raised in poststructuralist criticism. Although the voice can exist beyond its speaker, it risks being poorly reproduced, decontextualized, or misattributed such that it no longer suggests its original source, a line of inquiry that I will pursue further in [Chapter 3](#) ("The Master's Voice"), where I show how the power of an authoritative voice can be appropriated and even misrendered.⁴¹ This type of ventriloquism that threatens the original voice's integrity is described by the Jewish prophet Jeremiah. Among the wicked prophets whom Jeremiah criticizes are the Baal prophets and other false messengers, pagan ventriloquists whose divine messages derive from their own imaginations and not "*de ore Domini*."⁴²

Lest the *Exeter Book* Bible riddler seem a prematurely postmodern purveyor of simulacra or, worse yet, a pagan ventriloquist, we should note how he does in fact approximate Christ's words to his apostles as recorded in Matthew's gospel: "Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregare in nomine meo, ibi in medio sum" ("Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.")⁴³ Helpful for understanding

the Bible riddle's rendition of this promise is a version of it that appears at the opening of another tenth-century Old English text, namely, Vercelli Homily X: "he sylf gecwæp his halegan muð: þeah man anum men secge godspel, þonne bio ic þæronmiddan" ("He himself said with his holy mouth: whenever a man speaks the gospel to other men, I am there among them.")⁴⁴ The Vercelli homilist applies Christ's guarantee of his perpetual presence among the faithful to the particular scene of scriptural reading, which would include the homily's immediate performance context at Mass. The homilist thus subscribes to the logic underlying *voces paginarum*, that vocal reading evokes the text's absent authors, a phenomenon that would occur when the gospel's reader ventriloquized Christ's voice recorded in it. In specifying that this gospel quotation comes from Christ's own holy mouth (*his halegan muð*), the Vercelli homilist takes pains to assure his audience that the ventriloquized voice it hears issuing forth from the priest indeed originates from an authentic source. In turn, the homilist's reference to Christ's mouth is meant to endorse its current ventriloquial apparatus, the mouth of the priest who "speaks the gospel to other men" (*anum men secge godspel*).

Recall that the reader's mouth also serves as an organ for ventriloquial speech in the Bible riddle (#67). In disclosing that the book lacks a mouth (6, *nænne muð hafað*), the riddle tacitly alludes to how the Word is able to speak, namely, through the priest's mouth. Significant to the reader's ventriloquism of this Word-like voice is the other activity in which mouths are engaged in this riddle. After quoting the pseudo-scriptural passage, the riddle reveals that the scene of reading is also a scene of drinking, a place "þær gumon druncon" (14, where men drank). This affiliation of scriptural reading and oral ingestion unmistakably suggests *ruminatio*, in which the reader's use of his voice designated his incorporation of the text's words. As Hugh Magennis points out, the broad cultural import of *ruminatio* is evident in the association of beneficial eating and various textual practices, including hearing texts read.⁴⁵ When informed by the ruminative model, this riddle suggests the priest's mouth functions as an organ for Christ's voice, ingesting Christ's words as the men do their drink. This Bible riddle thus offers an accessible (if profane) explanation of the mystery of the Word's Incarnation in human form.

In addition to *ruminatio*, the riddle's reference to a drinking party is also an oblique description of the Mass that is surely intended to throw the riddle's audience off from solving it. Indeed, it calls to mind an environment notably less sacred than the celebration of the Eucharist. In the context of the Bible (#67), however, the Eucharistic allusion not only helps establish the riddle's liturgical setting but also pertains to its examination of reading practices. An obvious connection exists between taking the Eucharist

and ruminative reading; both acts are predicated on sacred ingestion. Perhaps the best-known comparison of the two appears in Augustine's observation of Ambrose's silent reading habits, which must have been so unorthodox as to be remarkable. In his *Confessions*, Augustine marvels at how Ambrose can ruminate on a text without vocally reiterating it: "But what hope [Ambrose] bore within him, what struggles he had against the temptations which beset his very excellencies, or what comfort in adversities, and what sweet joys Thy Bread had for the hidden mouth of his spirit, when chewing the cud thereof, I neither could conjecture nor had experienced."⁴⁶ Despite and because of Ambrose's silent reading, Augustine ascribes to him a "hidden mouth," which functions as would a vocal reader's heart or stomach, which, as Carruthers and Eric Jager point out, were the internal organs by which he would incorporate the written text.⁴⁷ Augustine invokes the Eucharist to impress upon his audience that Ambrose, though reading silently, still digests the text's spiritual essence as a vocal reader would when ruminating. As Lerer and Mark Amsler have noted, Augustine's comparison of reading with taking the Eucharist underscores the visceral and spiritual dimensions of ruminative reading.⁴⁸

Although this passage is a *locus classicus* on medieval reading practices, Augustine's comparison of the text's essence with the Eucharist as opposed to a more general "spiritual food" also discloses an impulse to explain Christ's Eucharistic presence—the "sweet joys" contained in the sacramental bread—in terms of textuality. We get insight into this tacit desire by considering Augustine's remark that reading texts provides a way to "converse even with the absent."⁴⁹ When this comment on the mediumistic nature of reading is interpreted *vis-à-vis* Augustine's famous analogy between meditative reading and taking communion, reading a text to communicate with absent entities becomes comparable to recognizing Christ's presence in the communion host.

To further illuminate how the *Exeter Book* riddles explore theological mysteries, I would like to consider the converse notion, that is, how realizing Christ's sacramental presence entails an act of mediumistic reading. The relationship between taking the Eucharist and reading implicit in the Bible riddle (#67) is explored more deeply in the chalice riddle (#59). This riddle is narrated from the point of view of an observer who describes the holy object in use at Mass:

Ic seah in healle hring gylденne
 men sceawian modum gleawe
 ferþpum frode fripospede bæd
 god nergende gæste sinum

se þe wende wriþan word æfter cwæð
 hring on hyrede hælend nemde
 tillfremmendra him torhte in gemynd
 his dryhtnes naman dumba brohte
 ond in eagna gesihð. (1-9a)

[In a hall, I saw men keen in mind and wise in spirit look upon a golden ring (i.e., a chalice). He who turned it prayed to God the Savior for abundant peace for his soul. Afterwards the ring spoke words in this company, named the Savior of well-doers. The dumb thing brought the Lord's name brightly into their memory and the sight of their eyes.]

Williamson helpfully suggests that the riddle describes an object like the Tassilo chalice, which was carved with letters or icons.⁵⁰ The riddler represents a scene in which worshippers witness the celebrating priest's recital of a Eucharistic prayer, a vocal performance that is followed by the chalice's own address to them when they behold it during Mass, when communion is distributed after Mass, or perhaps both. When astute men read the chalice's inscriptions, they supply a voice for this dumb thing (8, *dumba*), which not only speaks (5, *cwæð*) but also names the Savior (6, *hælend nemde*). This cryptic passage depicts the Eucharistic ritual as defined by ventriloquial reading. But what exactly occurs in this scene of ventriloquial reading?

Or perhaps the better question to ask: why does the riddler characterize this ritual in terms of ventriloquial reading? There are two potential scenarios. It is possible that the lay communicant is the one who reads the chalice. Indeed, in Anglo-Saxon England, lay people would have received the Eucharist under both species, the bread and wine, a practice that would end by the thirteenth century.⁵¹ Given that all of the *Exeter Book* riddles are predicated on the act of naming, that is, identifying the "mystery object," the chalice riddle's attention to Christ's name is important. The probable scenario is that the worshipper reads Christ's suffering body in the chalice's iconographic design, an interpretive act that brings "Christ's name" before the communicant's eyes (9, *in eagna gesihð*) and into his memory (7, *in gemynd*) while he takes the wine. At once, the recipient reads, ingests, and remembers, a cooperation of cognitive and physical activities that epitomizes rumination. What the recipient remembers when ruminating on "Christ's name" is his sacrifice; the worshipper engages in a private reflection that invokes the Mass's ritual significance as a commemorative allegory of Christ's Passion. The vocal element of rumination transpires when the chalice "names the Savior," a verbal performance that represents the communicant's act of responding to the priest's offer of "*Sanguis Christi*" with "Amen." Simply put, the communicant identifies the chalice's contents with Christ. This riddle

thus situates the chalice as part of the complex network of signs, images, and sounds that the worshipper read and decoded during the liturgy, a process that has been studied by Christopher A. Jones in his scholarship on the cooperation of literate practices and the liturgy.⁵²

More likely, however, it is the priest who reads and interprets the chalice. It is he who is set apart from the congregation as a man keen in mind (2, *modum gleawe*) and wise in spirit (3, *ferþum frode*). It is he who turns the chalice (5, *se þe wende wriþan*) and thus has the greatest amount of physical contact with it. The priest's ventriloquial performance entails him naming the Savior (6, *hælend nemde*), which he would obliquely do when speaking the transubstantiation formula, "This is the cup of my blood" ("Hic est enim calix sanguinis mei"), words originally spoken by Christ at the Last Supper. These words "name" the Savior by converting the chalice's contents into Christ's blood by speaking his words.

This act of ventriloquial reading has particular implications when the communicant or priest reads the chalice's decorative gemstones, which are meant to signify Christ's wounds. The riddler stipulates that the chalice will bring Christ's name into the reader's sight and mind "gif þæs æpelan/ goldes tacen ongietan cupe/ ond dryhtnes dolg don swa þæs beages/ benne cwædon" (9b-12, "If one knows how to interpret the wonder of the noble gold and the wounds of the Lord, he will do as the wounds of the ring said").⁵³ In the context preceding this passage, the riddler has insinuated that the communicant's or priest's role is that of a wise reader who decodes the chalice's markings and then speaks for this "dumb thing" (8, *dumba*). Yet, the riddler seems naively "taken in" by a ventriloquial trick when he claims that the wounds themselves speak. Indeed, these "speaking wounds" captivate the riddler so much that he refers to them once again in his final address to its reader: "ræde se þe wille/ hu ðæs wrætlican wunda cwæden/ hringes to hælepum þa he in healle wæs/ wylted ond wended wloncra folmum" (15b-18, "Explain he who wishes how the wounds of that wondrous ring spoke to men, when in the hall it was turned and turned in the hands of proud people"). Unlike most *Exeter Book* riddles, the chalice riddle does not close by asking the reader to identify the speaking object. Rather, by telling its own reader to explain (15, *ræde*) how the chalice's wounds spoke (16, *wunda cwæden*), the riddle exhorts him to reflect critically on the reading practices that accompany the reception or consecration of the Eucharist. The textual interpretation involved in decoding both the chalice and, in a more immediate sense, the chalice riddle is evident in the word "ræde" (15). As Nicholas Howe notes, "*rædan*" has numerous meanings, including "to explain something obscure," as in a riddle. He argues that "[i]n a culture unaccustomed to the written text, the act of reading would

have seemed remarkably like solving a riddle.”⁵⁴ Indeed, in a culture of burgeoning literacy, even reading the iconography on a chalice may have seemed like figuring out a riddle. Simply put, the chalice riddle reflects on the fact that the chalice is itself a riddle that the communicant or priest decodes when he verbally identifies the sacramental wine with Christ’s presence.

The chalice riddle’s depiction of the Eucharistic consecration as an act of textual interpretation speaks to the fact that the nature of Christ’s sacramental presence was itself something of a riddle in Anglo-Saxon England. While the question of whether Christ was bodily or spiritually present in the sacrament would underpin the famous eleventh-century Eucharistic debates, it had in fact been the point of contention in the less well-known First Eucharistic Controversy of the ninth century involving the Abbot Radbert Paschasius of Corbie (d. 865), who advocated Christ’s Real Presence, and a monk of the same abbey, Ratramnus (d. ca. 868), who argued for Christ’s spiritual presence in the sacrament. An Anglo-Saxon sermon for Easter Sunday by the homilist Ælfric (c. 955–c. 1010) reveals not only the Anglo-Saxons’ familiarity with this continental debate but also Ælfric’s own divided thoughts on the matter.⁵⁵ Theodore H. Leinbaugh even suggests the text not only played a key role in Eucharistic debates of the Elizabethan period but also inspired the growth of Anglo-Saxon studies during that time.

Within this late tenth-century homily Ælfric seems to support both positions on Christ’s presence in the sacrament. In relating a miracle in which a living child appears on the altar during the consecration, he lends support to Christ’s bodily presence in the sacrament. More often, however, Ælfric endorses Christ’s spiritual (“*gastlice*”) presence in the Eucharist, a viewpoint that would make him an appealing figure to Protestant Reformers. Of Ælfric’s explanations of Christ’s spiritual presence, most intriguing is one whose imagery is strikingly visceral:

For ði is þæt halige husel gehaten gerynu. for ðan ðe oðer ðing is ðæron gesewen. and oðer ðing undergyten; þæt þæt ðær gesewen is hæfð lichamlic hīw. and þæt þæt we ðæron understandað hæfð gastlice mihte; Witodlice cristes lichama ðe deað ðrowade. and of deaðe arás. ne swylt næfre heononforð. ac is ece and unðrowiendlic; þæt husel is hwilwendlic. na éce; Brosniendlic. and bið sticmælum todæled; Betwux toðum toco-wen. and into ðam buce asend.⁵⁶

[Therefore the Eucharistic host is called a mystery; because one thing is seen, and another thing understood. What is seen there has a bodily appearance. And that which we understand has a spiritual power. Truly Christ’s body suffered death and arose from death. It will not die ever again; it is eternal and incorruptible. The host is temporal, not eternal,

corruptible, and is divided in pieces; it is chewed between the teeth and sent to the belly.]

By describing the physical corruption that the host will undergo in the recipient's body, Ælfric means to convince his audience that Christ is not physically but rather spiritually present in the Eucharist.

In this portrait of the recipient's physical digestion of the sacrament, however, Ælfric also introduces a different paradigm by which to apprehend the Eucharist's significance, namely, its creation by the individual communicant. Here and throughout this Easter homily, Ælfric calls the Eucharistic host a mystery (*gerynu*) and thus designates receiving communion as an interpretive act. In particular, Ælfric's attention to the communicant's chewing and swallowing of the host suggests the visceral activity that underlies ruminative reading. When viewed as a ruminative act, taking communion requires the recipient to contemplate the Eucharistic mystery as well as enlists his physical sensorium in doing so. As the active reader chews on and ingests a written text in order to remember it, so does the "active eater" chew on the host (what is "seen") and send it to his belly in order to apprehend its mystery (what is "understood"). This connection between ruminating and receiving communion also reveals a literal explanation behind this sacramental mystery. If the reader's digestion of a text denotes his assimilation of its essence, so does the communicant's consumption of the material host indicate his incorporation of its mystery, that is, Christ's sacramental presence. Ælfric's arresting description of sacramental digestion implies that although Christ himself may not be physically present in the sacrament, his *gastlice* presence in the host is, quite literally, physically present in the communicant. In the same way as Ælfric in this Easter Sunday homily, the *Exeter Book* chalice riddle (#59) insinuates the communicant's or priest's role in creating the sacrament's meaning when he receives the communion wine. This is not to say that the *Exeter Book* riddler intends to characterize the theological question of Christ's Eucharistic presence as being a matter of personal opinion. Rather, the ultimate riddle posed by the chalice—"how the wounds of that wondrous ring spoke to men"—alerts the reader to how the chalice's iconography provokes his cognitive interpretation of and attunement to vocal performances pertinent to Eucharistic rites, whether his own or the celebrating priest's.

As is the case with most of the *Exeter Book* riddles, the chalice (#59) has an alternative—albeit idiosyncratic—solution, one that also addresses the nature of Christ's sacramental presence. The wounds may speak because, simply put, they themselves generate a voice, which in this context is Christ's. Other than providing a clever answer to the final question

posed in the riddle, substituting “Christ’s voice” for his blood draws into relief the chalice riddle’s investment in rendering his Eucharistic presence more apprehensible while still retaining its mystery. We can understand how this solution accomplishes these seemingly mutually exclusive tasks by reading the “speaking wounds” in light of the vexed relationship between a speaker and his voice. Like blood from a wound, the voice derives from the body yet is most recognizable to the senses only after it leaves the body, at which point it represents its speaker yet also calls attention to his physical absence. Although it is debatable whether garden-variety blood represents its bleeder, Christ’s blood indubitably has a significant (albeit disputed) association with him. The riddle’s author, in devising the image of “speaking wounds” that adorn the chalice, invokes the enigmatic connection between the voice and its speaker as an analogy for the one between Christ’s sacramental blood and his person. This tacit comparison between Christ’s voice and his blood also calls to mind the shared means by which each is received. When the voice departs from its speaker’s body, it penetrates his listener’s body, a process that simulates what happens during communion when Christ’s sacramental body is incorporated into the recipient’s. As a theoretical solution to the chalice riddle’s question of how the wounds speak, “Christ’s voice” gives witness to a fascination with the voice’s significance to personal presence that pervades the *Exeter Book* riddles. Simply put, this particular solution elicited by the Anglo-Saxon riddler’s question discloses his desire to explain Christ’s Eucharistic presence in terms of another mysterious yet more familiar phenomenon: the speaking voice.

As do the *Exeter Book* Bible riddles (#26 and #67), the chalice riddle (#59) thus portrays a liturgical reading performance in which the voice evokes an elusive presence, namely, Christ’s in sacramental objects. A related yet slightly different premise underlies the chalice/paten riddle (#48), which demonstrates how the priest’s voice represents his own postmortem subjectivity. The chalice/paten riddle records the testimony of a worshipper who beholds a holy object in use at Mass—either a chalice or a Eucharistic paten—that is gifted with marvelous speech:

Ic gefrægn for hæleþum hring ærendean
torhtne butan tungan tila þeah he hlude
stefne ne cirmde strongum wordum
sinc for secgum swigende cwæð
gehæle mec helpend gæsta
ryne ongietan readan goldes
guman galdorcwide gleawe beþencan
hyra hælo to gode swa se hring gecwæð. (1-8)

[I have heard of a bright ring (i.e., a chalice or paten) that brought a good message to men even though it was tongueless. It did not shout powerful words with a loud voice. This treasure spoke for men while keeping silent: "Save me, helper of souls." May men understand the mystery, the charmed speech of the red gold, and wisely entrust their souls to God as the ring said].

The familiar trick behind the object's ability to speak is the reader's vocalization of its written inscription. The reader in the devotional scenario that the riddle describes is most likely the priest, who may not utter this specific prayer but does pray over the sacrament, reciting Christ's words as he does so. It is he who would have prolonged contact with the holy object and thus the greatest opportunity to read its inscription. More so than the other riddles discussed in this chapter, the chalice/paten riddle foregrounds the reader's role in this ventriloquial paradigm in its emphasis on the unlikelihood of the object's speech. The object brings a good message though tongueless (*butan tungan*, 2); it speaks while keeping silent (4, *swigende cwað*). The full significance of this ventriloquial performance becomes manifest in the riddle's direction to attend to the vessel's charmed speech (*galdorcwide*, 7) in order to understand its mystery (*ryne ongietan*, 6). But in the chalice/paten riddle (#48), what exactly is the "mystery" that the reader should apprehend?

Quite simply, the mystery of this object's charmed speech resides not so much in its content as in the circumstance of its existence, that is, the reader's act of speaking for it. In the context of the Mass that the riddle describes, the reader is the priest who consecrates the sacrament. The object's silent speech refers not only to the priest's apprehension of its inscription but also perhaps to a more literal silence, that is, that which shrouded the recitation of Eucharistic secrets, a practice that I will examine in later chapters. The riddle's final line illuminates what is accomplished in this ventriloquial performance: wise men "will entrust their souls to God as the ring said" (7b—8, *gleawe beþencan/ hyra hælo to gode swa se hring gecwæð*). Strictly speaking, the circular vessel (i.e., "ring") itself has never said anything. Rather, the words written on it are ventriloquized by the person who reads the chalice or paten. Yet, it is the sacred object's voice that is important to this scenario, not the ventriloquial mediator's, as it contains the "charmed speech" and "mystery" that accomplishes the speaker's soul's communion with God.

In the priest's utterance of these magic words, this text ultimately conflates his use of his voice to consecrate the sacrament and his act of consigning his soul to God. In the other *Exeter Book* riddles that portray inscribed talking objects, the vocal reader mediates a distant presence

as would a ventriloquial oracle. The chalice/paten riddle, however, imagines the reader also functioning as a ventriloquial performer who “throws” his voice into an object physically removed from him, making him a biloquist.⁵⁷ In the context of this riddle and the liturgical scene that it portrays, the biloquist reader projects his voice to heaven. We might say that he speaks *to* a divine being rather than *for* him in his address to God that is prescribed on the sacred vessel: “Save me helper of souls” (5). The power of the object’s words and the reader’s voice is more closely matched in this riddle than in the others I have examined as the priest’s use of his voice allows him to have an extra-personal relationship with the divine. However, as we will see in [chapter 4](#), medieval culture, perhaps for its religious and oral roots, recognized the inherent power of sacred formulas. The priest’s voice does not ordinarily have this kind of power, that which derives from blessing the sacrament. This power comes from the “charmed speech,” which, though apocryphal, is inscribed on a Eucharistic object and thus is associated with Christ. These “Christ-like” words imbue the priest’s voice with such potential to transcend his physical person.

The indeterminate performance context of *Exeter Book* riddles was almost certainly not sacred, which is a relief given the profane themes raised in some of the collection’s best-known and sexually suggestive examples such as the key (#44) (“the strange thing” that “hangs by a man’s thigh” until he lifts his garment to fill the “familiar hole”), dough (#45) (the “boneless thing” that swells and stands and is grasped by a young woman), and the one-eyed seller of garlic (#85), which “had one eye and two ears and two feet, twelve hundred heads, a back and a belly, and two hands, arms, and shoulders, one neck and two sides.”⁵⁸ Although the riddles’ performance circumstances are mysterious, they do reveal what the audience’s sense of Anglo-Saxon religious practices might have been in the Bible (#26 and #67), chalice (#59), and chalice/paten (#48) riddles’ descriptions of scenes of voiced reading relevant to the Mass. These riddles are not intended to offer precise accounts of liturgical scenes. Rather, their dramatic representations of scriptural reading and Eucharistic rituals serve to focus the audience’s attention on the reading voice, the miraculous means by which the silent objects can speak. This reading voice functions as a key to the theological riddles about spiritual subjectivity that underlie the texts’ innocent invitations to identify their speakers. These riddles do not invoke the intimate relationship between the voice and personal presence offered by Western metaphysics and embraced in the culture of modern technology. Instead, it is the voice’s nebulous, paradoxical connection to personal presence that permits it to signify absent entities, in the form of the author “resurrected” through

the reader's ventriloquism of his words and Christ, who is likewise resurrected in the proclamation of the Word and reading practices associated with the Eucharist. In the next chapter, I consider further the ventriloquism of Christ's voice, in particular, how this phenomenon for the *Andreas*-poet is the primary means of distinguishing Christianity from errant pagan practices and beliefs.

CHAPTER 2

CHRIST'S LIPS MOVE

In the Old English life of Saint Andrew, a late tenth-century *Vercelli Book* text known as *Andreas*, the ability to recognize the divine voice is a criterion by which believers are distinguished from non-believers. These two discursive communities are embodied in Andrew himself, who preaches Christian doctrine yet initially balks at a request made by Christ himself to go rescue his fellow apostle Matthew from the Mermedonians, cannibalistic heathens who live in Ethiopia. Andrew assents but still has divine payback to face because of his resistance to obeying Christ's command. Christ adopts the form of the sea captain taking Andrew and his disciples on the dreaded trip to Mermedonia. As the two men talk, the conversation turns to the subject of Andrew's master—the one who preached and performed miracles. The apostle falls for the sailor's trick and proceeds to tell him stories about Christ until the ship lands. Once in Mermedonia, Andrew gives conflicting reports about his lengthy conversation with this sea captain. To his men, the apostle alleges that even though Christ had disguised his form (856, *þeh he his mægwlite besiðen hæfðe*), he recognized Christ's speech (855, *word*).¹ A short time later, however, Andrew makes no such claim to Christ himself. Instead, he asks Christ why he was unable to recognize him on the sea voyage. (Understandably, Andrew feels foolish that he has talked so much *about* Christ *to* Christ.) In his response, Christ makes sure that Andrew knows that he himself could have prevented this little contretemps, if only he had not at first refused the divine voice's order to rescue Matthew.

Scholars have noted, yet glossed over, Andrew's equivocation about whether he knew that he was in fact speaking to Christ in his disguise as a sailor. Regarding Andrew's allegation that he did recognize Christ's words although he had disguised his form, Robert Boenig merely notes, "[h]e actually did not."² Surely wanting to spare the saint some embarrassment, Edward B. Irving credits Andrew with an "unconscious

recognition” that he was speaking to Christ.³ Divided critical opinion on this issue raises questions about the intentions of the *Andreas*-poet himself, who never explains why Andrew tells these conflicting stories and, more importantly, why he gets away with it. Maybe the reading audience is to understand that Andrew simply adjusts his story for two different audiences, his men and Christ. This may be the case. But Andrew’s waffling can be seen as part of the poem’s larger design. In its portrait of the difficulty in recognizing the ventriloquially relocated divine voice, the poem gives witness to a Christian sort of ventriloquism that is defined over and against the errant ventriloquial practices associated with non-Christians, namely, the heathen Mermedonians and the Jews. As I will show, the *Andreas*-poet not only exposes the uselessness of heterodox ventriloquial media but also resignifies them as Christian organs for the divine voice. While the pagan ventriloquial media threaten to usurp the power of the divine voice, they ultimately do not.

In the most practical terms, Andrew’s talk with Christ the sailor promotes a fantastic image of the divine voice as it is ventriloquized by human media. Simply put, the poem’s audience observes the voice operating in a closed economy, deriving from and returning to its divine source. One example of this occurs when Andrew relates to Christ (the sea captain) things that Christ himself (his master) preached from his own mouth (651, *þurh his sylfes munn*). The apostle describes an occasion on which Christ commanded a stone angel to come down from the temple wall to preach to the Jews. Obeying Christ’s command, the animated figure orders the dead patriarchs to rise and give witness to Christ’s power. In this series of events, the curtain parts for the reader, who gets to witness the divine voice traveling a reassuringly closed circuit. Christ not only inspires the statue and the prophets to testify to his power; he also lets the story of his doing so get back to him through Andrew. Taken together, these episodes thus guarantee the validity of Christian media, which in Anglo-Saxon England would have the priest’s implied preaching, a fact that we can discern from the extensive contemporary homily collections produced by the Vercelli homilist, the Blickling homilist, and Ælfric, the last of whom I will discuss in greater detail in [Chapter 3](#).

The poem’s investment in this Christian vocal economy also raises questions about the voice’s eschatological import in Anglo-Saxon England. As I will show, *Andreas* is but one of many Anglo-Saxon works that imbues the voice with eschatological significance. My discussion of this topic here resonates with my first chapter’s, where I invoked the voice’s traditional association with personal presence to examine the reader’s ventriloquism of the author’s voice as well as Christ’s in the *Exeter Book* riddles. The voice’s nuanced relationship to individuality becomes evident in scenes of Final Judgment in Anglo-Saxon texts including *Andreas*,

where the voice functions as a conceit for imagining personal survival without physical decay. Eventually, all good souls (imagined as having properly functioning Christian voices) go back to their heavenly origins; this is featured as the person's accounting for himself at Judgment Day.

Matthew and the Divine Voice

From the beginning of *Andreas*, the voice is the means of knowing and accessing the divine, a notion apparent in the poem's portraits of Matthew's and Andrew's personal conversations with the divine voice. *Andreas*, its Greek and Latin analogs, and the Blickling homilist's life of Saint Andrew each begin by depicting the imprisoned Matthew's communications with God. Even though he languishes in a Mermedonian prison, Matthew's speech is eloquent, commensurate with the intimate exchange that he enjoys with God:

Eadig ond onmod, he mid elne forð
 wyrðode wordum wuldres aldor,
 heofonrices weard, halgan stefne,
 of carcerne. Him wæs Cristes lof
 on fyrhðlocan fæste bewundwen.
 He þa wepende weregum tearum
 his sigedryhten sargan reorde
 grette, gumena brego, geomran stefne. (54–61)

[Holy and resolute, with zeal he (Matthew) then praised the Lord, the ruler of the heavens, with words of thanks and with a holy voice. A song of praise for Christ was wound fast around his heart. Then, weeping with weary tears and sorrowful speech, he greeted his Lord, the ruler of men, with a sad voice.]

Matthew's eloquence contrasts with the Mermedonians' barbarism. As Dabney Bankert points out, they are not able to produce intelligent speech until after their conversion.⁴ Matthew's address to God is nothing short of remarkable, because although the Mermedonians have given him a draught that should have rendered him mute like a beast, he is able to speak, and with a "holy voice" (*halgan stefne*) at that. By robbing them of their power of speech, this magic potion ensures that the travelers who have dared come to Mermedonia "ne murndan æfter mandream" ("would not mourn for human joys").⁵ Instead of being able to speak, the captives are consigned to practicing an oral activity much less noble; they use their mouths to eat hay and grass like beasts.

The captives' humiliating punishment by the heathen Mermedonians represents a perversion of a particular kind of Christian vocal custom: the

voiceful (if pseudo-bovine) monastic practice of *ruminatio*, predicated on chewing a text *quasi mundum animal* (like a clean animal) as Cædmon did the religious texts that he turned into oral poetry. Instead of voicefully absorbing or verbally disseminating Christian teaching, these captives chew on grass and hay as dumb beasts (*swa þa dumban neat*, 67). The means by which these captives are prepared for slaughter and consumption represents another way in which the Christian custom of *ruminatio* is perverted by the Mermedonians. Ruminative chewing on texts becomes the (surprisingly literate) Mermedonians' use of the written word to designate when they will chew on which victim. As Christopher Fee argues, the Mermedonians' destructive writing contrasts with legitimate Christian writing, as Matthew is identified as "se mid Iudem ongan godspell ærest/ wordum writen wondorcræfte" (12–3, "the first among the Jews who began to write the gospel in words, with miraculous power"). The Mermedonians write "in runes and reckonings" (*on rune ond rimcræfte*, 134), their writing being more mysterious and employed for completely opposite ends.⁶ As Seth Lerer writes, "Their inscriptions emblemize a pernicious kind of letter, one that literally kills."⁷

When the poem opens, Matthew's time is already almost up as he is being prepared to be killed:

Ða wæs first agan frumrædenne
 þinggemearces butan þrim nihtum,
 swa hit wælwulfas awriten hæfdon
 þæt hie banhringas abrecaþ þohton,
 lungre tolysan lic ond sawle,
 ond þonne todælan duguðe ond geogoðe,
 werum to wiste ond to wilþege,
 fægæs flæschoman. (147–154a)

[Then was the allotted period of time passed, except for three nights. The slaughter-wolves had written that they planned to break his bone-rings quickly, to loosen body from soul, and then to divide the doomed flesh-house up for the young and old. Food for men: a feast.]

As Robert Boenig and David Hamilton point out, the Mermedonians' cannibalism distorts the Christian consumption of the Eucharist.⁸ And as John Casteen notes, their cannibalism would have recalled for a medieval audience God's punishment of the sinful in Hebrew Scripture; he has them turn into cannibals.⁹ The Mermedonians' cannibalism, however, also perverts Christian orality in that eating people according to a prescribed schedule substitutes for rumination on a written text. The Mermedonians' cannibalism signifies a pagan distortion of this vocally

oriented Christian textual practice that would have been highly relevant if the poem was read by or performed for a monastic audience.

The poem's Christian audience is meant to think that the Mermedonians' aggression toward the voice's powers renders them all the more savage. As Alexandra Bolintineanu points out, the poet repeatedly emphasizes the alien nature of the Mermedonians. The poet uses "*elþeodig*," meaning "foreign" or "alien," 12 times to describe them, which constitutes nearly half of the word's 26 occurrences in the entire Old English poetic corpus.¹⁰ Indeed, the nature of their own voices reveals them as being foreign and alien. The narrator calls them *ellreordigra* (1081), "strange-speakers" or "barbarous people," a designation that signifies their perverse relationship to the voice, the Christian voice in particular. Indeed, the heathens' failed attempt to rob Matthew of his voice evokes one particular annoyance that they would be rid of: his Christian preaching. Their hatred of Christian speech appears again later in the poem when the Mermedonians have captured and tortured Andrew. The apostle offers up a prayer to God, at which point the devil himself appears to voice his displeasure over these words that he would stop at their very source: "Sleað synninge ofer seolfes muð,/ folces gewinnan! Nu to feala reordap" (1300–1, "Smack that criminal, that enemy of the people, in the mouth! He talks too much!"). We can assume that the Mermedonians' desire to make Matthew adopt the oral habits of a beast is meant not only to humiliate him but also to silence his preaching voice.

Even after he has been blinded by the Mermedonians, Matthew still has a voice. Deprived of his sight, Matthew's sense of hearing is more acute, and he is thus rendered more receptive to hearing the divine voice:

Ðær gecyðed wearð
 þæt halig god helpe gefremede,
 ða wearð gehyred heofoncyniges stefn
 wrætlíc under wolcnum, wordhleaðres sweg
 mæres þeodnes. He his maguþegne
 under hearmlocan hælo ond frofre
 beadurofum ahead beorhtan stefne. (90b–96)

[There it was proclaimed that holy God would provide help. Then was heard the King of heaven's voice, the sound of the Lord's famous voice wondrous under the heavens. With his clear voice, he gave his battle-strengthened retainer health and comfort in jail.]

This brief passage refers to the divine voice several times (*stefn*, *sweg*, *wordhleaðres*, *stefne*). Likewise, Matthew's prayer was described in terms of his vocal powers (*wordum*, *stefne*, *reorde*). The *Andreas*-poet's attention to speech-making could suggest the influence of the heroic tradition on this

text, which later on chronicles Andrew's heroic showdown against the Mermedonians. To understand this feature of the text, we could compare *Andreas* to *Beowulf*, an epic poem in which speech-making precedes and is tantamount to heroic action.¹¹ In making this comparison, however, we should note that *Andreas*'s Latin and Greek analogs, the *Recensio Casanatensis* and the *Praxeis*, also include detailed descriptions of divine and apostolic voices, a pattern that reflects this particular text's investment in examining the power and workings of the Christian voice.

Christ Tricks Andrew

God speaks to Matthew while he is in prison and promises him that Andrew will soon come to rescue him. The divine voice tells Andrew, who is preaching in the Greek province of Achaia, about this errand:

Ða sio stefn gewearð
gehered of heofenum, þær se halga wer
in Achaia, Andreas wæs
(leode lærde on lifes weg),
þa him cirebaldum cininga wuldor,
meotud mancynnes, modhord onleac,
weoruda drihten, ond þus wordum cwæð. (167b–173)

[Then his voice was heard out of Heaven where the holy man, Andrew, was in Achaia. He was teaching people about the way of life. Then the glory of kings, the creator of mankind, the Lord of heavenly hosts unlocked his mind-hoard and thus spoke words to him, that very brave man.]

Although the Blickling homilist explicitly identifies this voice as Christ's, the *Andreas*-poet does not ascribe it to God or to Christ in particular. He does, however, insinuate its eloquence. Since Andrew himself has been using his own voice to carry out Christ's mission and "teach people" (*leode lærde*), he should represent a captive audience for the divine voice (*stefn*) and divine words (*wordum*). Although Christ has personally commanded him, Andrew does not wish to obey because he does not think he will be able to make it to Mermedonia in time to rescue Matthew. The apostle offers the great distance as an excuse for not wanting to go. Twice in the same speech Andrew remarks that it is a long way (191, *feorne weg*) and that he'd have to travel over the wide land (198, *ofer widland*). As Bolintineanu points out, "The Mermedonians' spiritual distance from the human norm is reinforced by the physical distance between Mermedonia and the rest of the world."¹² For my argument, the most important element of this "spiritual distance" is the perverse orality of the Mermedonians, which is suggested by their use of written texts to

designate when they will chew on their victims rather than to ruminatively chew on the texts themselves.

One would think the omnipotent voice that created the world would be able to persuade one of Christ's apostles. Indeed, the divine speaker seems to think so. In *Recensio Casanatensis*, the voice makes a veiled threat to Andrew by reminding him of its power: "[A]udi me, qui feci te. Amen, amen dico tibi, quoniam si iubeo verbum producere ut iubeam his qui commiscunt venti, statim eum defert coram me" ("Listen to me! I created you! Truly, truly, I say to you that if I give the word and command those who mix the winds, immediately [the city] would be brought down before me").¹³ The *Praxeis* and the Blickling homily likewise describe the voice's invocation of its power to create.¹⁴ Each of these texts implies that Andrew's unwillingness to go to Mermedonia is not just wimpy. It is also insulting to the power of the divine voice.

One possible reason why Andrew does not obey the divine voice is because it is not rooted in a recognizable body, such as Christ's. This possible misrecognition draws attention to the poem's various examples of ventriloquism—both heterodox and orthodox—which, taken together, interrogate the divine voice's relationship to its source. The first instance of this ventriloquial relocation occurs immediately after Andrew decides to carry out the divine voice's command, when the divine voice inhabits the form of a sailor to test the apostle. As Boenig notes, Christ initially identifies himself and his crew as Mermedonians: "We have traveled from afar, from the province of Mermedonia" (264–5a, *We of Mermedonia mægðe syndon/feorran geferede*). Once Andrew boards Christ's ship, that possibility is dispelled, but an "initial ambiguity is present."¹⁵ If Christ is not only a mere sailor but also a Mermedonian, this makes it additionally unlikely that he will produce a divine voice, which he of course does:

Him ða ondswarode ælmihti god,
swa þæt ne wiste, se ðe þæs wordes bad,
hwæt se manna wæs meðelhegendra,
þe he þær on waroðe wiðþingode. (260–3)

[Almighty God then answered him (Andrew). He who awaited the reply did not know, who this man was, the one holding counsel, the one who talked with him on the shore.]

Despite his changed appearance, we are led to believe that this divine speech sounds just as eloquent as before, when it commanded Andrew to rescue Matthew. In fact, Andrew himself remarks upon the sailor's verbal abilities: "Næfre ic sælidan selran mette,/ macræftigran, þæs ðe me þynceð,/ rowend rofran, rædsnotterran,/ wordes wisran" (471–4a,

“Never, it seems to me, have I met a better sailor, mightier, a stronger rower, more clever in counsel, and wiser in words”). By noticing the sailor’s seamanship as well as his wise words, Andrew signals for the audience the divine voice’s physical form as well as its sustained eloquence.

The topic of the articulate sailor’s speech is Christ, about whom he inquires further to Andrew:

Miht ðu, wis hæleð, wordum gesecgan
maga mode rof, mægen þa he cyððe,
deormod on digle, ða mid dryhten oft,
rodera rædend, rune besæton? (624–7)

[Might you, a wise young man noble of mind, describe in words the might that he, secretly powerful, often disclosed when you held secret conversations with him, the Lord, the ruler of the heavens?]

In response, Andrew asks him: “Hwæt frinest ðu me, frea leofesta,/ wordum wrætlicum, ond þe wyrda gehwære/ þurh snyttra cræft soð oncnawest?” (629–31, “Why do you ask me, dearest lord, in skillful words, when you know the truth of each event through your cleverness?”). Indeed, these words perhaps seem too skillful (*wrætlicum*) to come from a mere sailor. Such observations on Andrew’s part make it plausible that he indeed has an “unconscious recognition” that he is talking to Christ.¹⁶ More than just signaling his possible awareness, however, Andrew’s remarks on the sailor’s verbal powers cultivate irony. To put it bluntly, the poem’s reading audience laughs at Andrew’s expense, for it knows the real source of the sailor’s skillful speech (*wordum wrætlicum*). More importantly, the audience, who is “in on the joke,” is able to recognize the divine voice even though it comes from a mundane medium. This episode emphasizes the fidelity of Christ’s voice when it is ventriloquized, in particular, by priests, an issue that would have been of concern in the burgeoning parish-church culture of tenth-century England, a topic I will address in the next chapter.

Of course, to his men, Andrew does not admit that he was taken in by the sailor’s eloquence. After they have landed in Mermedonia, Andrew alleges to them that he was in fact able to recognize the divine speaker: “Ic his word oncnæow,/ þeh he his mægwilte bemiðen hæfde” (855b–6, “I knew his speech even though he had disguised his form”). In distinguishing between divine speech (*word*) and the sailor’s form (*mægwilte*), Andrew insinuates he knew that the sailor’s body was not the real source of the voice with which he spoke. The apostle claims to have realized that the sailor functioned as a divine dummy. As if to redress Andrew’s misrecognition of the divine voice as well as his inability to

own up to this blunder, the divine voice is relocated into yet another body, that of a youth (912, *þurh cnihtes had*). In this exchange, Andrew does not have the temerity to claim that he knew the divine voice when it came from the sailor. Embarrassed for having snubbed an old friend, Andrew asks why he was unable to recognize the divine voice back on board the ship:

Hu geworhte ic þæt, waldend fira,
 synnig wið seolfne, sawla nergend
 þæt ic þe swa godne ongitan ne meahte
 on wægfære, þær ic worda gespræc
 minra for meotude ma þonne ic sceolde? (920–4)

[How did it happen that I, sinning against you, did not recognize one so good, ruler of men, savior of souls? While on that journey, I spoke more words than I should have before my Lord.]

Andrew is certainly ashamed that he spoke “more words than [he] should have” to Christ yet did not know him. In the *Recensio Casanatensis*, Andrew alludes more tacitly to his ill-timed logorrhea when he admits that his “lips” and “tongue” “sinned” when he talked to Christ yet did not recognize him: “[P]eccaverunt enim labia mea dum te non cognovit spiritus meus. Peccavit lingua mea, dum te non cognoverunt oculi mei”¹⁷ (“My lips sinned as long as my spirit did not recognize you. My tongue sinned as long as my eyes did not recognize you”).¹⁸ By naming the physical source of his own voice (“lips” and “tongue”), Andrew realizes what his punishment was for not heeding the divine voice’s command; he is unable to identify the source of the sailor’s skillful voice.

Indeed, after Christ reveals himself, he himself pins Andrew’s inability to recognize the divine voice on the apostle’s initial refusal to heed his request:

Him andswarode ealwalda god:
 “No ðu swa swiðe synne gefremedest
 swa ðu in Achaia ondsæc dydest,
 ðæt ðu on feorwegas feran ne cuðe
 ne in þa ceastre becuman mehte,
 þing gehegan þreora nihta
 fyrstgearnas, swa ic þe feran het
 ofer wega gewinn.” (925–932a)

[The almighty God answered him: “You did not sin so greatly as you did when you made denial in Achaia, said that you could not travel distant paths over the tumult of the waves to go into that city (Mermedonia) to perform the task that I commanded in the span of three nights.”]

In answer to the apostle's question as to why he could not recognize him, God refers back to the fateful moment in Achaia when Andrew questioned his personal command to go rescue Matthew. As a punishment for not immediately obeying this command, Andrew is unable to recognize the divine voice. While the divine voice has proven unrecognizable to one of Christ's own apostles, its incarnation in the forms of the sailor and the youth flaunts its power. This voice that created all things—including Andrew himself—now commandeers human bodies as its mouthpieces.

Andrew's Conflicting Stories

The question that remains is one that has interested critics: why does the poem include Andrew's conflicting stories about his recognition that the eloquent sailor was Christ? Reading the Greek and Latin sources reveals that Andrew's two different stories are unique to the Old English poem. In *Praxeis*, the poem's Greek source, he makes just one claim. To his disciples, Andrew says that he recognized Christ's speech even through Christ's disguise. In the Latin source *Recensio Casanatensis*, Andrew does not make any claim to his apostles; he only tells Christ that he did not know him. Possibly, the *Andreas*-poet meant to portray his hero accommodating two different audiences, telling one version of the story to his men, another to Christ. Although this seems plausible, the confusion that Andrew experiences is evocative of ventriloquism, a phenomenon predicated on calling the voice's source into question. The popular entertainment-practice of ventriloquism captivates its listeners by allowing them to revel in the double take that transpires when a normally mute object "speaks." Despite one's better judgment, one believes, if only for a brief second, that the dummy really talks. The spectator, momentarily gulled by the ventriloquial voice, is in good company, for in the Old English life of Andrew the saint marvels at the sailor's eloquent speech yet does not figure out its source.

In Andrew's naïve reception of the voice—his belief that the dummy speaks—he unwittingly subscribes to pagan belief in ventriloquism in its various forms. As I explained in this book's introduction, the word "ventriloquist" denotes a pre-Christian prophet who feigned oracular speech by swallowing air to produce a "voice" in his stomach. Ancient ventriloquism also included a host of other practices predicated on relocating the voice's source. For instance, necromancers pretended to contact spirits of the dead by "throwing" their voices into the ground or their lower joints.¹⁹ If a potential ventriloquist lacked such skill, other means could be used to relocate the voice's source. Oracles could talk through an auto-phone, a series of pipelines that channeled the voices of concealed priests

through idols' mouths.²⁰ Other forms of ventriloquism plainly exposed its talking apparatus, such as the human media who verbalized or interpreted the prophecies received from an oracle. These ancient ventriloquial practices illuminate Andrew's inability to identify the divine voice when listening to the sea captain; he is enthralled by the talking object, thinks that it speaks through its own power and—despite the fact that the eloquent speech does not seem appropriate to a sailor—does not critically contemplate its source. Andrew's flawed reception of the divine voice is significant because throughout *Andreas*, its Greek and Latin analogs, and the Blickling homilist's life of Andrew, non-believers' rejection of Christianity is described in terms of their rejection of the divine voice. As we will see, the Mermedonians and Jews do not accept Christian preaching but instead heed idols, specious media for the divine voice.

Ventriloquism in Saints Lives

The voice's significance for religious orthodoxy and heterodoxy becomes evident if we read *Andreas* as a hagiographic text. Many saints' lives characterize pagans first and foremost as fruitlessly worshipping manmade idols. Their worship is fruitless because, as the saint will point out, these idols are "lifeless," "mute," and "deaf," slurs that respond to the pagan belief that human inventions can speak. For instance, at the beginning of the Old English *Life of St. Margaret*, a saint whose legend circulated widely in Anglo-Saxon England, the writer characterizes the pagans as tricked by ventriloquial speech: "[A]nd swiþe manega eac þurh deofles lare beswicane wæran, þæt hi beodan dumbe and deafe deofolgeld, mannes handgeweorc, þe naþor ne heom ne him sylfum to nanre freme beon ne mihton" ("And very many also through the devil's teaching were tricked, so that they prayed to deaf and dumb idols, the handiwork of men, which could be of no help either to them [those who prayed to them] or themselves [the idols]").²¹ The writer alludes to the pagans' misdirected belief in ventriloquism by describing their gods as "*dumbe and deafe*." The idols may speak through some type of manufactured means, that is, the same "*mannes handgeweorc*" that created them. Yet, the idols themselves cannot legitimately produce a voice since men—not God—created them.

Anglo-Saxon hagiographic texts authored by Ælfric of Enysham (ca. 955–ca. 1010) also denounce the errancy of pagan ventriloquial practices. In "*Sermo excerptus de libro Regum*" (LS I.18), the wicked (and ultimately, doomed) kings are characterized by their worship of idols and lack of attention to God's prophets. For example, the King Ahaziah is an *evildoer* (228, *yfel-dæda*) who sends his men to consult the idol (233,

hæðengilde) Beelzebub to inquire when exactly he will recover from his recent fall down the stairs.²² On the way there, his men run into none other than the prophet Elijah, a veritable source of divine revelation who upbraids them for their apostasy. Another work in Ælfric's collection of saints' lives renounces auguries (*De Auguriis*, LS I.17), a unique text among his hagiographic works in its focus on a particular theme rather than a person. This curious choice on Ælfric's part suggests that this text addressed vestigial pagan beliefs still held by Anglo-Saxon lay folk. Indeed, although much of the sermon was derived from sources such as Cæsarius of Arles (468/70–542), Martin of Braga (c. 520–80), and Hrabanus Maurus (c. 780–856), Audrey Meaney notes that the rest of the homily was original to Ælfric,²³ a fact that suggests its relevance to Anglo-Saxon England. At the very least, *De Auguriis* would have made its audiences aware of the traditional association of paganism with ventriloquial practices. Of people who make offerings to pagan idols, Ælfric poignantly comments:

Sume men...

nellað under-standan hu stuntlice hi doð
 oððe hu se deada stán oððe æt dumbe treow
 him mæge gehelpan oððe hæle forgifan
 þone hi sylfe ne astyriað of ðære stowe næfre²⁴

[Some men refuse to understand how stupidly they act. How could a dead stone or a dumb tree help them or grant them health when they themselves never stir from that place?]

In alluding to the “dead stone” (*deada stan*) and the “dumb tree” (*dumbe treow*), Ælfric refers to the practice of reading natural signs as divine revelations. The type of ventriloquism implied in auguries connotes “a preference for the candid and self-conscious ventriloquism involved in giving a voice to the incorporeal god, over the irrational and delusional ventriloquism which claims to allow us to hear the voice of god directly; it is a preference for speaking for the god over speaking as the god.”²⁵ The medium's act of speaking for God via auguries subverted the type of divine revelation that Ælfric himself conveyed in his vernacular homilies and hagiographic texts. Ælfric's recognition of this affront is apparent in what immediately follows this condemnation of auguries: “Se cristene man sceall clypian to his drihtne/ mid mode and mid muðe and his munda abiddan/ þæt he hine scylde wið deofles syrunga” (136–8, “The Christian man must cry out to his lord with his mind and mouth and pray for his protection so that he will shield him from the devil's traps”).²⁶ Ælfric offers proper use of the voice, “crying out” (*clypian*) to God with

one's mind and mouth, as a way of protecting oneself from pagan ventriloquial temptations.

The negative sorts of ventriloquism described in these texts are balanced by a famous, legitimate example found in the life of the martyred English king, Saint Edmund (ca. 840–70), a text written in Latin by Abbo of Fleury (ca. 945–1004) and translated into English by Ælfric. Edmund's conflict with the Danes culminates in the pagan invaders torturing him in order to make him abandon his Christian beliefs. He refuses to do so and instead calls out to Christ. To silence the saint, the Danish leader Hingwar cuts off his head. To prevent Edmund's proper burial, the Danes hide his head in the wilderness. When some pious country folk happen upon his decapitated body, they go in search of his head, calling out, "Hwær eart þu nu gefera?" ("Where are you now, friend?"). Edmund's head, which has been miraculously guarded by a greedy and hungry wolf, responds, "Hér, hér, hér and swa gelome clypode andswarigende him eallum swa oft swa heora ænig clypode oþþæt hi ealle becomen þurh ða clypunga him to" ("Here! Here! Here! And so it cried out repeatedly, answering them all, as often as any of them cried out until they all came to him by means of that crying out").²⁷ Edmund's reintegrated body is hastily interred in a makeshift grave. After the Danish invasions cease, a beautiful church is built at a site that would become known as Bury St. Edmunds.

In light of pagans' traditional association with ventriloquism, the miracle of Edmund's head speaking posthumously represents a Christian revision of their signature customs. A performance meant to underscore the saint's orthodoxy in the face of pagan depravity, the head's speech has an ambiguous effect. On the one hand, Edmund's voice, in coming from his head despite his decapitation, derives from what early church commentators identified as its rightful source. Speech that came from other parts of the body, such as the belly and the *pythia's* nether regions, was deemed corrupt. Since it comes from his head, Edmund's posthumous speech is legitimate, not ventriloquial. On the other hand, Edmund's head has been severed and thus his speech has the same unsettling effect that a ventriloquial performance does. Because Edmund has been decapitated, his voice cannot function as a sign of integrated personal presence, as vocal performances traditionally do. The possibility that the head's posthumous speech is somehow perverse helps explain why its reunion with Edmund's body and the lavish enshrinement of both together is such an important part of his mythology. This reunion validates his best-known miracle; his impossible vocal performance becomes associated with a veritable source, that is, a complete body.²⁸ In Edmund's legend, his fantastic voice serves to conjure his complete body, which the faithful can duly worship.

Heterodox Ventriloquism, Take One: Christ and the Jews

Instances of mediated divine speech in hagiographic texts help us understand the effect that portraits of pagan ventriloquism in *Andreas* would have had on them. In particular, Saint Edmund's miraculous ventriloquial performance provides a context for Christ's and Andrew's conversion of heterodox ventriloquial organs into media for divine speech in *Andreas*. The first example of such conversion occurs when Christ commands the stone angel to come down from the temple wall to preach to the Jews. As James W. Earl points out, the Jews and the Mermedonians are typologically linked.²⁹ Andrew's mission to the Mermedonians is patterned on Christ's mission to the Jews. Christ himself says so when he ultimately reveals his identity to Andrew and remarks that his suffering has set a pattern (971, *bysne*) for Andrew's own upcoming plight. Of the Jews' similarities to the Mermedonians, Shannon N. Godlove writes: "The Mermedonians are linked to the Jews through the poet's insistence on their literality, their magic, and their carnality as symbolized by cannibalism, all of which are medieval anti-Semitic stereotypes."³⁰ Among these heterodox stereotypes, the most important to my argument is their engagement with the magic, a host of practices that for the Jews would have included belief in divination through "talking" idols such as Baal and Beelzebub. The context in which the reader learns about the Jews' untoward proclivities suggests that these customs do in fact include ventriloquial divination. Just before the divine voice first speaks to Andrew to command him to go to Mermedonia, the poet notes God's opposition to the Jews' occult customs: "he Iudea galdorcraeftum/ wiðstod stranglice" (166–7, "he strongly opposed the Jews' magical practices"). Thus, the *Andreas*-poet juxtaposes the divine voice with the Jews' spurious beliefs and, by extension, suggests how their customs will be exposed as bogus by true Christian revelation.

While the *Andreas*-poet characterizes the Jews in terms of pagan magic, he does not describe their particular practices, ventriloquial or otherwise. The *Recensio Casanatensis*-author, however, does. In this Latin version of Andrew's life, the Jews actually worship the stone angel on the temple wall, an episode that evokes pagan worship of ventriloquial stone idols. Christ denounces the Jews' idolatry in the same terms that saints do pagan practices, which, as I have noted, often included ventriloquism. Like the deaf and dumb pagan idols in the Old English life of Margaret, the stone angels on the temple wall are manmade yet worshipped as gods:

et respexit dominus dextra lebaque et vidit ibi duas (s)ping[u]as mar-
moreas, in similitudinem quasi cherubim, quas colebant et adorabant

sacerdotas idolorum, una ad dexteram et alia ad sinistram. Tunc conversus iesus dixitque nobis, intendite et videte as compositiones artificii manibus, quasi caelum factum, similiter et as (s)pingas in similitudinem cherubim, et seraphim, expressas sicuti sunt celo.³¹

[And the Lord looked back to his right and to his left and saw there two marble images, in the likeness of cherubim whom the priests worshipped and adored as idols, the one on the right and the one on the left. Then Jesus turned and said, "Look and see these creations of the hands of craftsmen made like those in Heaven, similar to those images of cherubim and seraphim, formed just as if they are of Heaven."]³²

The Latin author uses the word "*spingas*" for "marble images." "Image" (*pinga*) thus becomes "sphinx." This slip is telling, as it suggests that the Latin author borrowed from the Greek source *Praxeis*.³³ In the Greek version, Christ brings his apostles and the Jewish high priests to Egypt, where he makes "carved sphinxes" talk.³⁴ The talking sphinxes in the *Praxeis* indicate that pagan ventriloquial practices do underwrite the stone angel's speech in *Andreas*, since the Sphinx functioned as an oracle.³⁵ Although (*s*)*pinga* is a mistake in the Latin source, it illuminates an aspect of the Jews' idolatry: they not only worship these stone idols but also regard them as oracles.

In the *Recensio Casanatensis*, when Christ commands the (*s*)*pinga* to talk, he not only addresses the Jews' beliefs in the idol's ventriloquial abilities but also resignifies traditional pagan ventriloquism as a means for divine revelation. Indeed, any power the (*s*)*pinga* might have had to deliver prophecies now pales in comparison with Christ's power to command it to walk and to talk:

Tu sculptilis quem sculperunt manus artificis, separa te de loco in qua stabis, et descende deorsum dabitur enim tibi a domino os ad loquendum, et ut conprobes, et innotescas istorum principibus sacerdotum qui in vos credunt, et qui vos colunt, so ego sum deus aut homo. Et statimque (s)pinga descendit de loco suo, et accepto a domino spiritum et locuta magna et dixit: "...Nunc autem ne putetis quod aliquid esem, vos putatis et dicitis, quod diis nostris offerimus, et multos seducitis alios dicentes, quod nos essemus deos."³⁶

["You, sculpture whom the hand of a craftsman sculpted, separate yourself from the place in which you stand and come down from there, for the Lord has granted you a voice to speak in order that you might establish and make it known for these prelates who believe in you and who worship you if I am God or man." So immediately the image descended from its place and, receiving the spirit from the Lord, spoke in a loud voice and said: "...Now then, do not think that I am anything else, for you made us from marble and we are stone and not God—as you think and you say, 'We offer to gods.' And you seduce others, saying that we are gods."]³⁷

While the *(s)pinga* initially seems to challenge Christ's power, it is ultimately shown up by him. In this scene, Christ stages an unbeatable ventriloquial performance. At his command, the statue proceeds to denounce the Jews' errant beliefs that, ironically, would have included consulting talking idols. Christ thus exposes ventriloquial revelation by appropriating it. Simply put, he shows the Jews what divine revelation through one of their idols would really sound like.

The talking *(s)pinga* in the *Recensio Casanatensis* helps explain the analogous episode in *Andreas* when Christ commands the stone angel on the temple wall to speak. In recounting this miracle to the sailor, Andrew discloses that it occurred after the Jews refused to receive Christ's words. Christ and his apostles have gone to the temple in Jerusalem, where the Jews rebuke and slander him. On a second visit, the Jews use their voices to disrupt Christ's preaching in the temple rather than ruminate on it: "Wordhleodor astag/ geond heahræced. Haliges lare/ synnige ne swulgon" (708b–710a, "Voices arose around the temple. The sinners did not swallow the holy one's teaching"). The Jews not only use their voices to blaspheme but also do not properly "swallow" (*swulgon*) Christian preaching despite the fact that it comes from Christ himself. The Jews attempt to undermine Christ, but he eventually exerts his power over them through his voice. In a last-ditch effort to command their attention, Christ makes the stone angel on the temple wall talk to them: "Stefn æfter cwom/ hlud þurh heardne" (738b–9a, "Then a loud voice came from the hard object"). Interestingly, Christ characterizes the real angels on which this one is modeled in terms of their sound-making ability:

Cheruphim et Seraphim

þa on swegeldreamum syndon nemned.
Fore onsyne ecan dryhtnes
standað stiðferðe, stefnum herigað,
halgum hleoðrum, heofoncyniges þrym,
meotudes mundbyrd. (719b–724a)

[Cherubim and Seraphim, as they are named in music. They stand stern before the sight of the eternal Lord. With holy voices, these ones chosen by the Lord praise him, the glory of the heavenly king.]

These angels give vocal performances for an audience no less rarefied than God himself. Christ facilitates an earthly approximation of such a performance by having the stone angel come down from the temple wall to give witness to his power. The stone's speech may very well describe that which derives from any number of talking idols, that is, a "loud voice" that comes from a "hard object." When it speaks, however, the

stone angel proceeds to upbraid the Jews for their errancy, particularly the way that the Jews have deviated from the pious example of their forefathers, such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Jews are affected yet not converted by the statue's words. The *Andreas*-poet describes their reaction in more detail than the Greek and Latin versions do. In doing so, he continues to yoke their religious errancy with corrupt speech, including belief in ventriloquism:

Æfter þyssum wordum weorud hlosnode
geond þæt side sel, (swigodon ealle),
ða ða yldestan eft ongunnon
secan synfulle, (soð ne oncneowan),
þæt hit drycraeftum gedon wære,
scingelacum, þæt se scyna stan
mælde for mannum. Man wridode
geond beorna breost, brandhata nið
weoll on gewitte, weorm blædum fag,
attor ælfæle. Þær orcnawe wearð
þurh teoncwide tweogende mod,
mægga misgehygd morðre bewunden. (761–772)

[To these words, the throng listened in that wide hall. They all fell silent. They did not know the truth. Then the eldest again began to speak sinfully. He said it was by wizardry, occult illusions that the magic stone spoke in front of them. Evil thrived in men's breasts. Burning-hot hatred welled in their wits, as did the serpent stained with pride and baleful poison. There a doubting spirit was manifest in their blasphemy. The evil thoughts of these men were wound up in murder.]

Witness what happens when the Jews behold the statue preaching. Characterized as transgressive talkers, they have filled the temple with noise and verbally challenged Christ. When the mute object speaks, they allege that it spoke through magic (*drycraeftum*, *scingelacum*). Although the Jews in *Andreas* do not expressly worship the stone angel as they do in *Recensio Casanatenensis*, their ready explanation for the statue's speech implies that their own *galdorcraeft* (166) includes ventriloquial practices such as those condemned in the book of Jeremiah. Their errant beliefs have warped their discretion such that they receive divine speech as ventriloquial trickery.

So while Christ succeeds in resignifying the Jews' ventriloquism, he does not convert the Jewish people themselves as Andrew will the Mermedonians. Even as they attribute the statue's speech to ventriloquial magic, however, the Jews themselves function as vehicles for ventriloquial speech that attests to their depravity. When the statue first speaks,

they fall silent (*swigodon ealle*), an act that draws attention to their next verbal performance, which is fraught with blasphemy (*þurh teoncwīde*). This upstart talk derives from the evil (*man*), burning-hot hatred (*brandhata nið*), poison (*attor*), and serpent (*weorm*) inside of them. These entities reside in their breasts and wits (*breost, gewitte*) and thus evoke ventriloquism in its literal sense, that is, speech that comes from a bodily source other than the mouth. The *weorm* that resides within the Jews implies one of the more notorious sources for ventriloquial speech. Although the “serpent stained with pride” designates Satan, an alternative meaning of *weorm*, “dragon,” calls to mind the *pythia*, who was named for the dragon Apollo defeated at Delphi, the future site of her oracle. Whether this scene in *Andreas* alludes directly to the *pythia*, it addresses similar anxieties about nonnormative sources of speech. In direct defiance of divine speech, the Jews’ errant speech comes from evil agents seated somewhere in their bodies other than their mouths. The Jews thus cannot abandon belief in spurious ventriloquism because they are essentially spurious oracles themselves.

Heterodox Ventriloquism, Take Two: Andrew and the Mermedonians

The stone-angel episode in *Andreas* and its variants in other versions of Andrew’s life illustrate the Jews’ apostasy through their poor reception of Christ’s voice as well as their reverence for traditional ventriloquism. Christ exposes the purported power of oracles by commandeering the stone image as a medium that decries the Jews’ errant beliefs. Such resignified ventriloquial power will also be Andrew’s and with greater success, as the Mermedonians are converted to Christianity. Like many saints in hagiographic texts, Andrew is a thinly-veiled Christ figure, the most obvious likeness being each man’s bodily suffering, three-days’ worth in Andrew’s case.³⁸ As Frederick M. Biggs points out, the words Andrew speaks during his Passion approximate Christ’s on the cross:³⁹

Hwæt, ðu sigora weard,
dryten hælend, on dāges tide
mid ludeum geomor wurde
fyrnweorca frea, to fæder cleopodest,
“Ic ðe, fæder engla, fringan wille,
lifes leohtfruma; hwæt forlætest ðu me?”
On ic nu þry dāgas þolian sceolde
Wælgrim witu! Bidde ic, weoroda God,
þæt ic gast minne agifan mote,
sawla symbelgifa, on þines sylfes hand. (1406–17)

[Hey, Protector of victories, Lord savior, in the course of days among the Jews, you became sad. You, living God, lord of creation, Glory of kings, called out to the Father and said thus: "I ask you, Father of angels, Light-source of life, why do you forsake me? And I now for three days have suffered grim tortures. I ask, God of hosts, Feast-giver of souls, that I might give my soul into your own hands."]

As Biggs suggests, Andrew ventriloquizes the crucified Christ's words: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"⁴⁰ and "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit,"⁴¹ a verbal performance that reinforces the typological relationship between Andrew and Christ.

To my argument, the most relevant similarity between Christ and Andrew is each man's ability to resignify pagan ventriloquism thus to channel the divine voice through ventriloquial organs. Andrew's show-down is with the Mermedonians, an episode that culminates in his act of commanding stones—in particular, the columns on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed—to speak. The columns' performance calls attention to the perversity of the Mermedonians' cannibalism; they have eaten people rather than ruminated on the sacred words written on the pillars. Andrew orders these ancient holy treasures to testify to Christ's divinity: "Ðurh his halige hæs þu scealt hræðe cyðan/ gif ðu his ondgitan ænige hæbbe" (1520–1, "Through his holy behest you shall testify now if you have any knowledge of him"). As soon as Andrew finishes talking, the stones begin to testify (*cyðan*) by breaking forth with a flood.⁴² As Thomas Hill and Marie Michelle Walsh argue, this flood serves as baptismal waters that convert the Mermedonians to orthodoxy.⁴³ But more importantly, the stone that released the flood now serves as "cupbearer" that offers the cannibals a salty flood to ingest: "Ðæt wæs sorgbyrþen, bitter beorþegu. Byrlas ne gældon,/ ombehtþegnas. Ðær wæs ælcum genog/ fram dæges orde drync sona gearu" (1532b–35, "It was a load of sorrow, bitter beer-drinking. The cupbearers and servants did not delay. From the day's very start, there was immediately enough drink prepared for each of them"). The "bitter beer" served by the columns not only redresses the Mermedonians' cannibalism but also calls attention to the *Andreas*-poet's framing of the flood as an oral performance.

Insight into why he does so can be gained from the *Praxeis* and the Blickling homily, which reveal that these pillars have in fact served to hold up an idol. In these two texts, Andrew commands that the idol testify, at which point it issues forth floodwaters from its mouth, an act that signals its function as an oracle. Before cueing the idol's liquid loquacity, Andrew reprimands the Mermedonians for worshipping it rather than heeding the Ten Commandments inscribed on the pillars that support it. In doing so,

he gives the Mermedonians a bit of backhanded positive reinforcement, explaining why they are different from the useless idol they revere:

And looking into the middle of the prison, Andrew saw a pillar, and upon the pillar an alabaster household statue. And looking up, Andrew stretched out his hands seven times, and he said to the pillar and the statue upon it, "Be afraid of the image of the cross at which the heavens and the earth tremble, and let the statue resting upon the pillar bring up water through its mouth, until all the ones in the city are taught. And you will not say, 'I am a stone, and I am not worthy to praise the Lord'; for the Lord molded us from earth, but you are clear of dirt; because of this, from you were given the tablets of the law."⁴⁴

Andrew commands the idol to unleash floodwaters from its mouth "until all the ones in the city are taught." The idol's ventriloquial voice thus becomes a preaching voice that both castigates the Mermedonians and also levies punishment on them for their inability to value righteous speech. Rather than receive Christian teaching, they worship the alabaster statue, whose speaking abilities are implied in the attention paid to its mouth as well as the flood by which it "teaches" the Mermedonians. To convert them to proper verbal religious practices, Andrew commandeers their idol and uses it as a ventriloquial organ to teach them, as if the Mermedonians will better receive the apostle's words through a familiar medium.

Implicit in Andrew's attempted conversion of the Mermedonians is their subscription to the voice's proper use. Simply put, they will hopefully use their mouths to praise the Lord rather than to worship idols, to consult with spurious oracles, and to eat people. This does indeed happen. Right after the stone testifies through the flood, the Mermedonians are converted and receive Christian teaching: "Cristenra weox/ word ond wisdom" (1677b–1678a, "Christian words and wisdom flourished"). The poem closes with a vocal performance by the Mermedonians in which they enthusiastically praise God: "An is ece god eallra gesceafta . . . Ðæt is æðele cyning!" (1717, 1722b; "He alone is the everlasting God of all created things! . . . He is a good king!"). In the Blickling homily on Andrew, the Mermedonians even beg the apostle to stay. He departs, only to have God command him to return because of the efficacy of their vocal performance: "Ðara círm and wóp to me astah on heofonas" ("Their cry and lamentation has ascended to me in heaven").⁴⁵

The Christian Vocal Economy

This "*círm* and *wóp*" that reaches God in heaven assumes a Christian vocal economy in which all voices derive from and circulate back to their

divine creator. In *Andreas*, this economy is seen on two occasions. The first is when Christ the sailor gets to hear Andrew discuss his teachings. Christ's words make it back to him through the ventriloquial medium of Andrew. The other is when Christ gets the stone angel in the temple to speak; Christ, whose voice was not received by the Jews, instills in the stone angel a voice. The stone gives witness to Christ and then resurrects Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who likewise use their voices to testify to the divine power. Thus, Christ sets in motion a sequence of voices that both proceed from his mouth and also refer back to him.

How such an economy would have been received in Anglo-Saxon England becomes apparent in the events that follow the divine voice's initial conversation with Andrew. While interred in a sailor's form, the divine voice puts Andrew up to a challenge: "Gif ðu þegn sie þrymsitendes,/ wuldorcyninges, swa ðu worde becwist,/ rece þa gerynu, hu he reordberend/ lærde under lyfte" (417–420a, "If you are a follower of the one dwelling in majesty, the King of Glory, as you say, narrate then the secrets of how he taught the speech-bearers [i.e., humans] under the sky"). Perhaps to prove to "the sailor" that he is not just an overzealous fan, Andrew repeats back the words of the "King of Glory." In this exchange, Andrew's reiteration of Christ's words also serves to prove to the poem's reading audience his personal knowledge of him. As in the scenario with the stone angel, Andrew's repetition of Christ's words speaks to the *Andreas*-poet's investment in an interpretation of the voice endorsed by traditional Western metaphysics. Even when Christ's voice is removed from his person, it still functions as a sign of his presence. This condition has implications for all Christians, which is evident in the fact that Christ's preaching has been heard not only by Andrew but also by the *reordberend* (419), "speech-bearers," that is, people in their voiceful capacity. If Andrew's knowledge of Christ's words denotes his intimacy with him, any speech-bearer thus has a relationship with Christ just by receiving and, hopefully, reiterating his words. Christ's own validation of this logic can be seen in a famous biblical scene recorded in Vercelli Homily X when he promises to be present whenever the gospel is being preached (*þeah man anum men secge godspel*). The Vercelli homilist goes on to note that Christ spoke these words with his own holy mouth (*he sylf gecwæð his halegan munde*).⁴⁶ Some speech-bearers were fortunate enough to get to hear Christ himself preach. Yet, as Vercelli Homily X suggests to its Anglo-Saxon audiences, Christ's words have the power to evoke their holy source even when he is not present.

The assumption underlying this scene in which Andrew repeats Christ's words to the sailor is that divine revelation will not undergo etiolation despite its reiteration through various media, a message especially

relevant to the burgeoning vernacular preaching culture of tenth-century England, which I will treat in the next chapter. We might be concerned about the veracity of Andrew's words in light of his initial unwillingness to heed the divine voice. But, indeed, Andrew's faithful repetition of Christ's words guarantees they have not suffered change in the apostle's mouth. To reinforce this fact, the apostle takes pains to vouch for their veracity by rooting the words that he speaks to the sailor in Christ's mouth:

nu ic þe sylfum secgan wille
 oor ond ende, swa ic þæs æðelinges
 word ond wisdom on wera gemote
 þurh his sylfes muð symle gehyrde. (648–651)

[Now I will tell you yourself, beginning and end, the prince's words and wisdom as I always heard them from his own mouth in the company of men.]

Andrew's act of hearing "words and wisdom" (*word ond wisdom*) from "Christ's own mouth" (*þurh his sylfes muð*) attests to the value of Andrew's preaching and, by extension, that of all Christian discourse. This orthodox doctrine even circulates among the Mermedonians, who, in the poem's conclusion, receive Christian preaching and praise God. The poet's efforts to trace Christian teaching back to Christ's own mouth resonates with God's warning rendered by Jeremiah: do not listen to oracles that come from bogus prophets and rather than *de ore Domini*. In *Andreas*, the Christian vocal economy that originates *de ore Domini* and circulates through human media is set over and against heterodox ways of using and receiving the voice that characterize nonbelievers. Christ and Andrew not only demystify pagan ventriloquism but also ascribe a divine source to all Christian voices.

The Christian Voice and Eschatology

Most significant for the Christian resignification of pagan practices is how it evokes a traditional aspect of ventriloquism: its capacity to resurrect the dead. To illustrate this point, I turn once again to the stone angel's resurrection of the dead patriarchs. In trying to make sense of this strange episode, Penn R. Szytta writes that the statue represents Christ, and the resurrection of the forefathers his harrowing of hell.⁴⁷ While this reading does not refute my argument that the divine voice speaks through the statue, it does not interpret this incident in the context of other mute objects that speak in the poem and its sources, which I read

as examples of necromantic ventriloquism. A discussion contemporary with *Andreas* of this ventriloquial capacity can be found in Ælfric's homily on the Witch of Endor, about whom Ælfric remarks that her worst atrocity was her claim that she could resurrect the dead Samuel to counsel Saul, a feat that Christ alone could perform. Although it might seem untoward to draw a comparison between Christ's ability to resurrect the dead and ventriloquial conjuring, the Anglo-Saxon poet known as Cynewulf comes close to doing just that. His *Vercelli Book* poem *Elene* portrays Christ as "se ðe deadra feala/ worde awehte" (944b–945a, "He who raised many of the dead with his voice").⁴⁸ In *Andreas*, it is Christ's verbal command that animates the stone angel by making a "loud voice" come out of the "hard stone." The *Andreas*-poet portrays other voiceful entities taking a cue from Christ, such as the stone angel that engages in necromantic ventriloquism when it raises the dead fathers with its voice. And it is Andrew's eloquent speech (1621, *hleodorcwidum*) that resurrects those Mermedonians killed by the flood.

This ability to resurrect the dead with one's voice may be the privilege of the heterodox ventriloquist or of Christ and of his saints; however, these ventriloquial performances in the poem *Andreas* speak to a widely held fantasy about the power of all voices. The phonocentric bias that Derrida famously identified in Western thinking attributes to the voice an association with presence because it originates in the speaker's body and thus putatively guarantees his proximity. In turn, its position within the body suggests that the voice is a manifestation both of subjectivity and also of life itself. A ready example of the voice's popular association with life underlies Connor's observation about cartoon animation. In voiceless animation, the characters gestured to convey their states of mind. After the advent of voiced cartoons, the characters are no longer "subordinated to the miming imperative." The characters' voiced response to a situation dictates their bodily postures.⁴⁹ Thus, although the ventriloquist resurrecting the dead who "return" in their voices might seem the stuff of superstition, this phenomenon in fact appeals to cultural perceptions of the voice's intimate relationship to life itself.

In a related vein, the voice has had a long-standing connection to the soul. Indeed, as Jonathan Rée notes, metaphysicians such as Aristotle and Hegel have linked the voice with an immortal soul or divine spirit.⁵⁰ Aristotle asserted that the "[v]oice is a kind of sound characteristic of what has soul in it; nothing that is without soul utters voice."⁵¹ From a phenomenological perspective, the voice comes from its speaker but can exist beyond him or her, like the soul. Yet, unlike the soul, the voice's personal transcendence is routinely enacted and witnessed. Thus, in *Andreas* we should read the poem's interrogation of the divine voice's

mediation as relevant to Anglo-Saxon eschatological beliefs. The familiar conceit of a voiceful soul that underlies the *Andreas*-poet's attention to the Christian voice also entails the notion of the body's fragility, as is apparent in *Andreas* in the description of the Mermedonians' violent and methodical treatment of Christian bodies, which directly precedes the depiction of heaven in terms of the body's disintegration: "þær soðfæstra sawla moton/ æfter lices hryre lifes brucan" (228-9, "Where steadfast souls may enjoy life after their body's decay"). It would seem that the gory fate of the travelers who wander into the hands of the cannibals awaits all Christians. Albeit brief, this comment on the Christian after-life discloses how the Mermedonians' mutilation of bodies speaks to an Anglo-Saxon cultural anxiety about the body's eventual disintegration and, by extension, what became of a person after death.

Further insight into how the poem was meant to evoke theological questions about the dead body's relationship to the soul can be gained from another version of Andrew's legend that appears in a twelfth-century Old English homily. While the homily does not mention the cannibals or, for that matter, anything about Andrew's apostolic mission besides his recruitment by Christ, it does treat the body's eventual disintegration in its discourse between the soul and body. The homilist mourns the body's appetitive nature that is epitomized in its belly, whose dominance over mankind's lot stems from Adam's eating the forbidden fruit. The homilist sadly comments, "þureh þat one snede wearð al his ofspring achekeð" ("through that one morsel, all his offspring choked").⁵² As in other soul-and-body dialogues,⁵³ the voiceful soul complains that it must suffer inside such a vile body: "Aweilewei þu fule hold þat ich auere was to þe iteid. longe habbe ich on þe wune. swo swo is me þe hwile" ("Alas! Thou foul abode, that I was ever tied to thee. Long have I dwelt in thee, and woe on me the while").⁵⁴ The beriddled soul wishes that the body become food for worms to gnaw on, an appropriate fate given the body's excessive allegiance to its own stomach. For the mere fact that the soul is the person's voiceful element that is able to address the rotting body, this slightly later life of Andrew can help us interpret the *Andreas*-poet's investment in the Christian voice's perdurability as being suggestive of the soul's.

In Anglo-Saxon texts contemporaneous with *Andreas* we get a sense of the voice's eschatological dimension from the word "*reordberend*," which means people, but more literally "speech-bearers," humans in their voiceful aspect. "*Reordberend*" and its variants appear only eight times in the whole Old English corpus, always in religious poetry. Recall that in *Andreas*, the word "*reordberend*" characterized the live audience for Christ's preaching who enjoyed a connection with him by hearing his

voice. The audience's vocal powers are invoked to imply that speaking—either through voiced *ruminatio* or evangelism—should complement the experience of divine revelation. In the *Andreas*-poet's use of the word *reordberend*, he insinuates that Christ's voice will be ventriloquized by the speech-bearers in performances that will perpetuate his voice.

In other Anglo-Saxon texts, "*reordberend*" is more overtly eschatological than in *Andreas*. In these texts, *reordberend* suggests not only the perceived connection between the voice and the Christian soul but also an economy of the voice that derives from and returns to God, a notion in which the *Andreas*-poet is likewise invested. The account of Final Judgment in the *Exeter Book* poem known as *Christ III* [Doomsday] describes how Christ summons the deceased speech-bearers:

Daga egeslicast
 weorþeð in worulde, ðonne wuldorcyning
 þurh þrym þread þeoda gehwylce,
 hateð arisan reordberende
 of foldgrafum folc anra gehwylc
 cuman to gemote moncynnes gehwone. (1021b–1026)⁵⁵

[The most awful of days comes to pass in the world, when the King of Glory in splendor corrects each of the people. He will call the speech-bearers, each and all of the people, every member of mankind, to arise from their earthly graves to come to the meeting place.]

This depiction of Christ resurrecting the *reordberend* from their graves speaks to the voice's eschatological nuances. Although the dead do not use their voices in this scene, it is in their voiceful capacity, as *reordberend*, that these mortals arise from death. Their resurrection is accomplished through Christ's voice (*hateð a-risen*), which also raises the dead in *Elene*.

Christ III goes on to describe the meeting to which these speech-bearers are called, that is, Final Judgment, where they will be held accountable for their sins:

Onginned þonne to þam yflum ungelice
 Wordum mæðlan þe him bið on þa wynstran hond
 þurh egsan þrea alwalda god.
 Ne þurfon hi þonne to meotude miltse gewenan,
 lifes ne lissa, ac þær lean cumað
 werum bi gewyrhtum worda and dæda
 reordberendum sceolon þone ryhtan dom
 ænne geæfnan egsan fulne. (1362–1369)⁵⁶

[Then, in a different way, the all-powerful God will begin to speak words to those evil ones, a threat of horror to those who are at his left hand. They

need not then expect mercy from the Creator, neither life nor forgiveness, but there retribution shall come to all men according to their words and deeds. Each one shall suffer a righteous judgment full of awe.]

In this scene in *Christ III*, the speech-bearers are the wicked approaching God as the Judge who reproves them for their sins. It may seem odd, given the voice's divine associations, that the wicked who face doom and listen to God's awful speech are described as "speech-bearers." This portrait of Final Judgment, however, is meant to suggest how these speech-bearers have failed; they did not speak up when they should have. Their apocalyptic castigation and punishment for sins calls to mind a mundane context in which the damned should have used their voices, namely, in confession. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the Anglo-Saxon pastoral care initiative addressed the urgent need for the laity to go to confession, an act that would avert the ugly scene at doomsday portrayed in *Christ III*.

The word "reordberend" also describes those summoned to Final Judgment in *Elene*, an Anglo-Saxon poem about Saint Helen's discovery of the true cross. A text predicated on disclosure, *Elene* ends with the ultimate revelation of the speech-bearers' sins:

Sceall æghwylc ðær
reordberendra riht gehyran
dæda gehwylcra þurh þæs deman mup,
ond worda swa same wed gesyllan,
eallra unsnyttro ær gespreccena,
þristra geþonca. (1281b–1286a)⁵⁷

[There shall each of the speech-bearers hear judgment for each of his deeds through the Judge's mouth. In such a way he shall make an agreement for all their foolish words spoken previously and all their shameless thoughts.]

As in *Christ III*, it is in their voiceful capacity as "speech-bearers" that humans will have an audience with God himself, where they will hear about their sins "through the Judge's mouth" (*þurh þæs deman mup*). In addition to experiencing the Judge's castigation, the speech-bearers' transit to the afterlife entails listening to the divine voice that initially created them. Christian subjectivity itself is constructed as being voiceful, and it is at a vocal performance that the dead will meet God.

Like Cynewulf does in *Elene*, the *Andreas*-poet depicts the divine voice as the Alpha and Omega, a construct that reflects on the divine voice's power and, in a more immediate sense, the poem's portrait of a Christian vocal economy. After Andrew is tortured in body and mind

by the Mermedonians, he calls out to Christ with a “holy voice” (1399, *halgan stefne*). Christ seeks to uplift the saint’s spirits with an inspiring talk that describes the end of the world:

Soð þæt gecyðeð
 mænig æt meðle on þam myclan dæge,
 þæt ðæt geweorðeð, þæt ðeos wlitige gesceaft,
 heofon ond eorðe, hreosaþ togadore,
 ær awæged sie worda ænig
 þe ic þurh minne muð meðlan onginne. (1435b–1440)

[Many shall proclaim the truth in that assembly on that great day, that it will come to pass that that splendid creation, heaven and earth, shall fall together before any word is destroyed that I through my mouth endeavored to speak.]

Implicit in Christ’s soothing words to Andrew is an endorsement for the power of the divine voice: the universe, originally created by God’s voice, will someday cease to exist. But all of Christ’s words, most immediately those he now speaks to Andrew, will stand fast. Christ’s guarantee of the durability of the words that come from his mouth (*þurh minne muð*) resonates with Andrew’s earlier promise to the sailor that the words he repeats derive from Christ’s own mouth (651, *þurh his sylfes muð*). Taken together, all of Christ’s verbal performances in *Andreas* speak to an economy of the Christian voice.

The Old English poem *Andreas* concludes by reinforcing the notion that the Christian voice’s economy is one that holds up eternally, under any circumstance. Divine speech is incapable of etiolation. This economy, as I have suggested, is epitomized in Andrew’s repetition of Christ’s words to Christ when he was disguised as a sailor and the episode where Christ instructs the stone angel to testify to his power. The divine voice is shown to possess integrity despite being moved to a different organ. But what if the apostle, so unscrupulous as to question Christ’s command to rescue Matthew, had “flubbed a line” when recounting Christ’s “*word and wisdom*” (650)? Worse yet, what if Andrew admitted to passing on this misinformation to the people he is supposedly instructing? Christ’s immediate reaction notwithstanding, such error would call into question the voice’s affiliation with the divine and thus compromise the Christian vocal economy. Although the voice’s traditional association with personal presence provides a perspective through which to interpret its literary depiction in *Andreas*, one should question how such assumptions about the voice apply to actual preaching performances. I consider the practical circumstances surrounding preaching and the anxieties they produce in the next chapter.

PART II

ANXIETY AND THE CLERICAL VOICE

CHAPTER 3

THE MASTER'S VOICE

The texts written for a clerical audience by King Alfred (849–99) and the homilist Ælfric (ca. 955–ca. 1010) exhibit a sustained investment in describing the priest's voice as the seat of his power and the most important tool for carrying out pastoral care. This chapter studies how the priest channeled the divine voice in two contexts: preaching, in which the priest spoke *de ore Domini*, and confession, in which he served as God's proxy.¹ Indeed, Anglo-Saxon texts frequently refer to priests as "*Godes bydelas*," God's messengers. As C. M. Woolgar points out, "[t]he transcendental power [of speech] was commonly understood in the Middle Ages. Speech, like other sounds, could effect direct changes in listener and speaker. It was thus extremely powerful, nowhere more so than when dealing with the Word of God or his agents."² In this culture, the power of the priest's voice was enhanced by particular types of vernacular instruction, namely, one-on-one education in the form of private auricular confession and preaching to unlearned lay people.

Alfred and Ælfric wrote in the context of the pastoral care initiative that characterized the burgeoning culture of Anglo-Saxon English parishes, which John Blair dates as having taken place in mid-eighth through eleventh centuries, seen first in the infusion of minster culture into secular life and then realized in the proliferation of actual smaller, local churches in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.³ Although the official birth of the parish church was a century away, pastoral care for the laity had begun in the century before Alfred's reign, which was marked by his investment in educational reform and vernacular translation. It continued during Ælfric's career, which included his production of the most extensive contemporary cycle of vernacular homilies as well as his efforts to help clergy reconcile their monastic training with their secular parish work. To remind their clerical audience to use the voice properly, Alfred and Ælfric describe occasions in which the priest's voice both commands

power yet also loses it in becoming subject to ventriloquial control by the laity. Taken together, these writers' texts portray the priest's use of his voice to carry out pastoral care as urgent as well as strange.

In this chapter, I show that Alfred's translation of the *Regula pastoralis* of Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604) and Ælfric's directive and vernacular preaching texts disclose a concerted effort to promote and to understand the potential of the clerical voice. Though they wrote just over 100 years apart, Alfred's and Ælfric's cultures were each marked by a fervent interest in two types of clerical vocal performance that contributed to the development of parish church culture: confession for Alfred and confession and preaching for Ælfric. My focus on these performances expands on scholarship on Anglo-Saxon clerical literature, which most often attends to these texts' cultural contexts, transmission history, influences, sources, and linguistic features. Addressing this oversight, John W. O'Malley speaks to the problems with these approaches: "[T]hey fail to take into account the most distinctive feature of preaching, that is, it is a speech act. The greatest challenge to its interpreters is to overcome the evidence we possess in order to try to arrive at a better understanding of a reality that was oral and fleeting."⁴ This chapter examines what was "oral and fleeting" in exploring how the works of Alfred and Ælfric reflect on the power of the clerical voice on a lay audience and even the priest himself. It begins with a discussion of this power in the space of the parish church, a relationship most evident in the public penance model's exclusion of sinners from hearing part or all of the liturgy depending on their penitential status, a custom that preceded and informed private penitential practices in Anglo-Saxon England. In both spatially organizing worshippers and also exhibiting their individual religious subjectivities, the public penance model attests to the voice's ability to blur the distinction between public and private spheres, a phenomenon that, as I will argue, occurs even in the private confessional customs predominant in Anglo-Saxon England. In private auricular confession, this disruption of spatial boundaries included the one between the priest and the lay person. In particular, it fostered a dependence of their voices that gave way to the people's ventriloquial control over the priest's voice. Upon close inspection, this cultural anxiety about the priest's loss of control over his voice results from the over-definition of his voice as the seat of his power, which thus is commodified and portrayed as available to unauthorized speakers to appropriate.

The Preaching Voice and Religious Space

The ventriloquial dynamics described in this chapter ultimately derive from the voice's relationship with space. As Stephen Connor puts it, "The

voice always requires and requisitions space.”⁵ In its modern manifestation, ventriloquism’s entertainment value stems from its relocation of the voice, which is associated with its speaker’s body yet also able to leave it. In its routine use, the voice’s perceived association with personal presence means that its movement between the speaker and his audience implies his command over the space between and around them.

The power of the clerical voice to control religious space is evident in Ælfric’s “*Sancti Benedicti Abbatis*” (*Catholic Homilies* II.9), a life of Benedict of Nursia (480–547) drawn from Gregory the Great’s *Dialogues*. Scholars have envisioned various audiences for Ælfric’s homilies. For all of his homilies, Mary Clayton notes, Ælfric imagines two audiences: the private reader and the lay congregation.⁶ Jonathan Wilcox suggests that Æthelweard, Ælfric’s patron, used his personal copy for private reading or had it read to his household in a “pseudo-liturgical manner.”⁷ Malcolm Godden argues for the value of the *Catholic Homilies* as reading texts for pious lay folk and also for monks whose grasp of the liturgy’s Latin may not have been as strong as it should have been.⁸ Although these instances of private reading of sermons are compelling, more important for my purposes is the priest’s out loud performance of them, a performance context that allows us to examine how his voice affected his audience.

The *Catholic Homilies* from which the life of Benedict is taken are two sequences of 40 homilies that were written at Cerne between 987 and 995 to be delivered on Sundays and feast days throughout the church year. They circulated widely throughout England. As Kenneth Sisam argues, Ælfric “wanted to supply the English clergy with a foundational book which would cover the principal occasions for preaching.”⁹ In this homily intended for Saint Benedict’s feast, Ælfric portrays sound as the defining feature of Benedict’s monastery at Monte Cassino to insinuate how the priest’s preaching voice would infuse secular religious spaces during the preaching performance. This particular monastic house is an appropriate subject for a homily on the clerical voice, given that it set a pattern for other religious houses in its paradigmatic association with religious sound. The monastic code of silence did nothing less than define these houses in the terms of the voice’s exercise, namely, the rule of silence, which, as David Knowles notes, even encompassed the monks’ freedom to speak during work-related activities.¹⁰

As Godden points out, Ælfric touches on the rule for monks only briefly at the end of the homily.¹¹ He does not speak of Benedictine silence at all. Yet, he makes a telling allusion to the voice’s use during the construction of Benedict’s first monastery at Monte Cassino. Ælfric’s single use of the word “silence” in this homily appears in his discussion of Monte Cassino’s conversion from a pagan temple to Christian space.

The temple's resident devil, unhappy with such renovation, cannot but voice his displeasure: "Þa ne mihte se ealda deofol þas dæda mid swigan forberan" ("Then the old devil could not bear these deeds in silence").¹² Unable to tolerate his eviction in silence, the devil lets out a loud scream (*micclum hreame*) in his diabolical voice (*deofellican stemme*)¹³ to scare away the brothers working on this building project. Albeit unsophisticated, the devil's strategy to reclaim the temple capitalizes on the voice's ability to requisition space, a capacity that informs Connor's remark that the conqueror is always a "loud-speaker," that Stalin was just Genghis Khan with a telephone.¹⁴ When Benedict exorcises the devil from his new monastery, he borrows the devil's tactics by wielding his own voice to regain control over the religious space.

In "*Sancti Benedicti Abbatis*" Ælfric intended his message about how religious space is constructed by the voice for several possible audiences. Wilcox notes that Ælfric anticipated a mixed audience, including monks, nuns, and secular priests in addition to the laity.¹⁵ The latter two groups interest me the most. Priests may very well have been trained in monastic houses to provide pastoral care to lay people in parish churches. As Christopher Jones notes, Ælfric conceived of the *ordo monasticus* in elastic terms that included the *ordo clericalis*. In particular, Jones argues for the tendency of Anglo-Saxon monasteries to include pastoral functions, meaning that monasteries (especially in small towns) would have to offer clerical training.¹⁶ Although David Knowles contends that the monasteries did not engage in any sort of pastoral work,¹⁷ Frank Barlow argues contra Knowles that "it became not unusual for monasteries to supplement the parochial work of a sparse and sometimes remiss priesthood."¹⁸ This would have included the training of priests for which Jones argues. As the clergy listened to or even delivered the homily about Benedictine space from Ælfric's vernacular cycle, they would have recognized that their own voices could dominate religious space. The homily's second noteworthy audience is lay people, for which Wilcox argues: "That such a performance in church was the primary use of the homiletic series is seen in their distribution. Massive dissemination from Canterbury saw copies of the homilies going to centers throughout England. The audience for them was implicitly a range of social classes, both men and women, gathered in church on a Sunday or saint's festival."¹⁹ For the laity, the immediate issue was not whether to emulate the noisy devil and take charge of church space with "*micclum hreame*." Instead, as lay people listened to this sermon, they were made aware that the priest controlled the province of the church space—including them—with his voice.

Surprisingly—or not—the clerical voice's ability to control space is perhaps most evident in its attenuation as it moves through the church.

This phenomenon can be seen in the Easter Monday homily of Gregory the Great, who was important to Anglo-Saxon authors of homiletic literature for his initiative to re-Christianize England, his investment in clerical education of the laity, and his own cycle of sermons, which served as sources for Anglo-Saxon homilists such as Ælfric. Gregory begins his Easter Monday homily with something of an odd personal confession: he has a sore throat. Whether real or rhetorical, his condition means that the sound of his voice will not reach "the many" but only "the few."²⁰ In his observation that few lay people will hear the sermon while many will not, Gregory uses reverse psychology to enhance his voice's power. What listeners would not be aware that they were part of a privileged group included within hearing range of the homily? Gregory's comment on his voice's attenuation speaks to its power to foster discursive communities and, by extension, to define each listener's religious subjectivity through sound. "The few" would be a distinct discursive community able to hear the homily, while "the many" would be excluded from it.

Gregory's exegesis on his voice's physical movement through the church space offers insight into the clerical voice's role in public penitential customs such as public confession and temporary excommunication of penitents practiced in contemporary continental cultures. Most relevant to my discussion is a custom that organized individuals at church in tiers of decreasing distance from the altar according to their penitential station: the weepers, hearers, kneelers, co-standers, and the rest of the congregation not currently undergoing penance.²¹ In this arrangement, we can observe how the clerical voice's movement in space influenced each individual's religious subjectivity. The "weepers" and the "hearers," the designations applied to the two outermost tiers, attest to how the clerical voice's relative audibility meted out penance. The weepers stood outside the church door and were excluded from hearing the entire service. Positioned relatively closer to the altar than the weepers were the hearers, who stood in the vestibule and were dismissed after they heard the sermon, right before the Eucharistic celebration. The difference between the weepers' and the hearers' positions suggests the valence that the public penance model assigned to the audibility of the preaching voice.

The boundary between these two communities, both labeled by sound-oriented terms, served to define the church as a sound-oriented arena by demarcating its acoustic horizon, the point past which the priest's voice could no longer be heard. As Bruce R. Smith points out in his study of sound in Early Modern culture, the acoustic horizon works to foster a constricted sense of space due to sound's directionality and tendency to dissipate, qualities that distinguish it from the culturally privileged sense of sight, which

is predicated on a viewer's perception of a fixed object.²² Thus, the hearers' physical presence within the church, at the edge of the acoustic horizon, gave meaning to the worshippers' varying abilities to hear the preaching voice, that is, how well they could hear it depending on how close they were to the altar. And while the hearers' departure before the Eucharist surely contributed to the sacrament's mystery, their precommunion leave-taking also reflected on the importance of hearing the preaching voice. In its designation of the "hearers" and "weepers," terms that denote whether the priest's voice is heard by or withheld from the individual listener, the public penance model thus served to publicize the individual's sensory experience of the Mass. The spatial positioning of the weepers' and hearers' bodies also reflects on the voice's ability to confound the boundary between public and private space, in particular, between the acoustic environment and the bodies of individual subjects that inhabit it.

Penance and Confession in Anglo-Saxon England

How were the public penance model and its constituent organization of public and private space relevant to Anglo-Saxon religious customs and the uses of the voice they entailed? Rites constituent to public penance are mentioned in the penitential literature used in Anglo-Saxon England. For instance, the organization of church space according to penitential station, in particular the position of the hearers, is mentioned in the Penitential of Theodore (668–90).²³ The homilist Wulfstan's call for repentance in his signature sermon "Sermo Lupi ad Anglos" does not specify confession through the private model that was supposedly more prominent in his culture. In fact, in Wulfstan's homily for Ash Wednesday, he describes the Lenten practice of expelling from the church those guilty of "open and capital sins," who would then wait outside its confines as did those expelled from paradise.²⁴ Allen J. Frantzen argues that the two penitential systems were "complimentary rather than mutually exclusive" and credits Wulfstan with maintaining the dichotomy by "vigorously invest[ing] in both forms of reconciliation."²⁵ Lynne Grundy also writes of Wulfstan's particular interest in public penance, noting that he alone is concerned with the practice.²⁶ Wulfstan's description of a custom common to public penance in his Ash Wednesday homily resonates with Ælfric's catalog of the various official positions that comprised the Anglo-Saxon parish church setting. This included the *ostaris*, the doorkeeper, who "sceall mid bellan bicnigan þa tida 7 þa cyrcan unlucan geleaffullum mannum 7 þa ungeleaffullan belucan wiðutan" ("must indicate the hours with a bell and unlock the church for believing men and lock unbelievers without").²⁷

To illuminate Ælfric's take on public penance, Frantzen cites evidence from the pastoral letters and contends that these suggest that the Anglo-Saxons used the dual system of penance inherited from the Carolingians.²⁸ Brad Bedingfield, however, interprets the evidence differently. Despite Ælfric's reference to the public exclusion of sinners that we occasionally find,²⁹ the form of penance to which he most often subscribes in his homiletic works implies the private, priest-based system.³⁰ As Bedingfield notes, the lack of explicit commentary on public penance in Anglo-Saxon England by so major a figure as Ælfric impedes speculation on its relationship to the better-documented private mode. In a similar vein, Grundy notes that Ælfric rarely refers to public penance and that he prefers the private model for its "educational value in the meeting of the priest and penitent."³¹

Whether public penance was less important than the private model in Anglo-Saxon England, we should recognize that public penance not only precedes but also underpins the private model prevalent in that culture, as is evident in Ælfric's homily for the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost (*Catholic Homilies*, I. 33). In this homily, Ælfric explains Luke's account of the resurrection of the widow's son of Naim, which provides a point of departure for his discussion of personal "resurrection" from sin that is facilitated by confession and penance. He makes the curious comment that "private sins" (*digelan gyltas*) should be atoned for privately and open sins "publicly" (*openlice*). Ælfric's statement resonates with Carolingian penitential codes that mandated public penance for grave sins. A passage in the same homily suggests for Bedingfield Ælfric's familiarity with some form of public penance: "gehwylcne synfulne mannan þe bið mid healicum leahtrum on þam inran menn adyd. 7 bið his yfelness mannum cuð" ("for each sinful man who is inwardly defiled with capital sins, his evilness is known to men").³² Although Ælfric may be referring to a public penitential practice that was somehow absorbed into the Anglo-Saxon private model, what I find important is the essence of his statement—that if one is "inwardly defiled with capital sins," these will become "known to men." Whether relevant to a private or public model, Ælfric features penance as a rite that somehow publicizes one's personal penitential status.

The connection between private confession and public exposure likewise underlies Ælfric's sermon for Shrove Sunday (*Catholic Homilies* I. 10), a feast that directly preceded Ash Wednesday and was the designated time for lay people to go to their priests for confession.³³ This homily portrays the public exposure inherent in confession as part of a grandiloquent vocal performance. Its pericope is Luke's account of Christ's healing of a blind man on the road to Jericho. This miracle occurs because the blind

man cries out to Jesus for forgiveness of his sins even though bystanders tell him to remain silent:

þa gelamp hit ꝥ hi genealehton anre byrig. þe is gehaten hiericho. 7 þa sæt
þær sum blind man. be ðam wege: 7 þa ða he gehyrde þæs folces fær mid
ðam hælende. þa acsode he hwa ðær ferde; Hi cwædon him to. ꝥ ðæt wære
þæs hælendes færr. þa began he to hrymænne 7 cwæð: Hælend Dauides
Bearn gemiltsa min; þa men ðe beforan þam hælende eodon ciddon
ongéan þone blindan ꝥ he suwian sceolde; He clypode ða micele swiðor:
hælend dauides bearn. gemiltsa min.³⁴

[Then it happened that they (Christ and his followers) approached a city that is called Jericho. There sat a blind man by the way. When he heard the people with Christ passing by, he asked who went there. They said to him that the Savior was passing by. The blind man began to yell aloud, saying, “Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me.” Then the men, those who were going before Christ, chided the blind man, and told him that he must be silent. He called out all the more, “Savior, David’s Son, have mercy on me.”]

As Aaron J. Kleist points out, Ælfric takes a cue from Augustine and Gregory in connecting sight with understanding and belief. Both Augustine and Gregory suggest that the blind man has an understanding of what he lacks, an understanding that comes from God’s intervention. With an individual’s recognition of his or her spiritual blindness, Ælfric presupposes God’s grace.³⁵ An Anglo-Saxon audience, however, would have attended to the blind man’s act of “yelling” (*hrymænne*) to Christ, which would have connoted their own verbal, private confession of sins. In confessing his sins, however, the blind man had to overcome the protests of an entire mob, which Ælfric interprets as “þa ealdran leahtras þe he ær geworhte 7. hi gedrefað his mod 7 willað gestillan his stemne: ꝥ he to gode ne clypige” (“the old sins that he worked before. They disturb his mind and will silence his voice, so that he does not cry out to God”).³⁶ Ælfric’s description of inward sins as external agents that silence the voice suggests that private confession is a public performance subject to public influence. In portraying the individual’s choice to conceal old sins as the intercession of a vigilant mob, Ælfric implies that even when a sinner tries to keep his sins private, this too functions as a public activity. Ælfric’s homily teaches his audience that any decision governing the voice’s use in confession—either to cry out or to remain silent—is ineluctably poised in a public arena.

Ælfric’s homily describes the sinner’s voice silenced by his own secret sins, which are represented by a public crowd. In the scenario that Ælfric constructs, the sinner’s voice is relocated from his own body (which

harbors his "old sins") to the listeners who would silence him. Given the lay person's obligation to go to confession on Shrove Sunday, the homily's portrayal of the relationship between the sinner's voice and his audience evokes the auricular confessional exchange, a fact that becomes evident at the end of the homily when Ælfric describes how the priest will respond to a sinner's confession: "Cume for ði gehwa cristenra manna. to his scrifte: 7 his diglan gyltas geandette; 7 be his lareowes tæcunge gebete" ("Let each Christian man come forth to his confessor and confess his secret sins and reform by his teacher's direction").³⁷ The onus is on the sinner to speak, to overcome the forces that would silence him, thus to elicit the priest's remedial speech. Earlier in the homily, the sinner's voice was described as contingent on his audience who would silence it. Now, the sinner's audience is the priest, whose verbal interrogation of the sinner is meant to have an opposite effect: to make him speak.

The Silent Sinner's Ventriloquial Voice

But what of the sinner who is unwilling to speak, who, in Ælfric's paradigm, allows his private sins to silence his voice? The sinner's decision to remain silent about his sins is addressed in Alfred's translation of Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*, the *Hierdboc*.³⁸ Alfred not only translated Gregory's treatise on the responsibilities of parish clergy but also prefaced his *Hierdboc* with his eloquent lament on the decline of learning among the clergy, a circumstance that necessitated the translation of Latin texts such as *Regula pastoralis* into the vernacular. Although the preface may promise to disclose more about Alfred's authorship than his translation of *Regula pastoralis* does, we should remember that Alfred did select this lengthy text as part of his education initiative. In light of the fact that more than half of the *Hierdboc* is devoted to explaining how the priest should verbally admonish different types of sinners, Alfred's act of translating Gregory's work reveals that he also wished to impress upon parish priests the text's message about the power of the clerical voice. Two such sinners in need of verbal admonishment are the silent and the loquacious, whose correction is treated as its own topic in chapter 38: "Ðætte on oðre wisan sindon to manienne ða þe to swiðe swige bioð, on oðre wisan ða þe willað to fela idles 7 unnyttes gespræcan" ("That there are ways to admonish those who are too silent and other ways those given to too much idle and worthless talk").³⁹ This chapter on the silent and the talkative sinners not only offers practical advice for priests but also examines how the clerical and lay voices cooperate in confession, which, as Frantzen points out, Alfred would have interpreted in terms of the private penitential system of his time.⁴⁰

In reading this chapter, we soon learn that the silent person is in fact not silent per se. As in Ælfric's Shrove Sunday homily, the sinner's silence does not signal an absence of speech but rather draws attention to the voice's interiorized workings. The *Hierdboc* thus exhorts its clerical audience to attend to how their silent lay charges inwardly castigate their loquacious neighbors:

Ac forðæmþe mon ne mæg utane on him ongietaþ for hiera suigean hwæt mon tæle, hie beoð innane oft ahafene on ofermettum, swa ðæt hie ða felasprecan forseoð, 7 hie for nauht doð, 7 ne ongietað na hu suiðe hie onlucað hiera mod mid ðæm undeawe ofermetta, ðeah hie ðæs lichoman muð belucen; ðeah sio tunge eaðmodlice licge, ðæt mod bið suiðe upahafen, 7 sua micle freolicor he tælð on his ingeðonce ealle oðre menn sua he læs ongitt his agene uncysta.⁴¹

[Because of his silence, one perhaps does not see in him (the silent person) on the outside anything one might blame. Yet, they are often inwardly full of pride, so that they despise the loquacious and think them worth nothing. They do not perceive how greatly they unlock their heart to the sin of pride although they have locked up their bodily mouth. Although the tongue lies humbly still, the heart is greatly filled with pride. The more freely he blames in his mind all other men, the less he perceives his own vices.]

Although the silent person attempts to mislead his audience by privately castigating his neighbors, the *Hierdboc* demystifies this ruse by revealing there is really no such thing as keeping silent. Rather, the voice has been ventriloquially relocated from the silent person's mouth to his heart. While the silent person attempts to avoid having a public audience for his inward conversation, he in fact stages a performance that is witnessed by God himself:

Eac sint to manianne ða suiðe suigean ðæt hie geornlice tiligen to wietanne ðæt him nis na ðæs anes ðearf to ðenceanne hwelce hie hie selfe utane eowien mannum, ac him is micle mare ðearf ðæt hie geðencen hwelce hi hie innan geowigen Gode, 7 ðæt hei swiðor him ondræden for hiera geðohtum ðone diglan Deman, ðe hie ealle wat, ðonne hie him ondræden for hiera wordum 7 dædum hiera geferena tælinge.⁴²

[Also the very silent are to be admonished so that they learn fully that it is not only necessary to recognize how they behave in their outward actions toward others. It is in fact more necessary for them to recognize how they display themselves inwardly to God. Because of these thoughts, they should dread more the secret Judge (who knows them all) than they dread the opinion of their companions because of their words and deeds.]

The voice has not been successfully suppressed but rather moved to the silent person's interior, where it is heard by God. Since the priest himself

knows how to interpret the silent person's silence, he too enjoys a position of divine omniaudience, a perspective that suggests how the priest serves in God's stead during confession.⁴³

The *Hierdboc* explains to its clerical audience how to reroute this ventriloquial performance so that it derives from the sinner's mouth, an initiative that will move this insidious private performance into the public arena. The silent person will not do this of his own volition but instead requires the intervention of the priest, who stages a vocal performance that introduces a series of verbal admonishments:

Oft eac ða suiðe suigean, ðonne hie monige unnytte geðohtas innan habbað, ðonne weorðað hie him to ðy maran sare innan, gif hie hi ut ne sprecað, ond hwilum gebyreð, gif he hit gedæftelice asægð, ðæt he mid ðy his sorge gebet. Hwæt we wieton ðæt sio diegle wund bið sarre ðonne sio opene, forðam ðæt worms ðæt ðærinne gehweled bið, gif hit bið utforlæten, ðonne bið sio wund geopenod to hælo ðæs sares. Eac sculon weotan ða þe swugiað ðonne hie ðyrfen, ðætte hie hiera sorge ne geiecen mid ðy ðæt hie hiora tungan gehealden. Eac hie sint to manianne, gif hie hiera nihstan lufien swa sua hie selfe, ðæt hie him ne helen forhwy hi hie tælen on hiera geðohte, forðæm sio spræc cymð hiera ægðrum to hælo, forðæmþe hio ægðer ge ðæt gehwelede on ðæm oðrum geopenað 7 utforlæt, ðæt he wierð ðonon gehæled, ge ðone oðerne gelærð, 7 his undeawa gestierð. Se þe onne hwæt yfeles ongiet on his nihstan, 7 hit forswigað, he deð sua sua se læce þe gesceawað his freondes wunde, 7 nyle hie ðonne gelacnigan. Hu, ne bið he ðonne swelce he sie his slaga, ðonne he hine mæg gehælan, 7 nyle?⁴⁴

[Often also the very silent, when they have many vain thoughts within them, become all the more wounded within if they do not speak them. Sometimes it happens that, if they announce them properly, they amend their pain. We know that the hidden wound is more painful than the open one. Therefore the pus that is welling therein should be let out. The wound is thus open, and the sore will heal. Those who are silent need to know that they are not to aggravate their wounds by holding their tongues. Also, they are to be warned, if they love their neighbor as themselves, that they not withhold from them the reason why they blame them in their hearts. Speech thus brings each of them health. In (the silent person), it opens up the wound and lets out the pus so that he then becomes healed in teaching the other and correcting his sins. He who perceives evils in his neighbors and remains silent about it does as the doctor who sees his friend's wounds and is not willing then to treat them. How is he not then like his neighbor's killer when he might heal him and won't?]

This particular invocation by Gregory of the familiar "priest as doctor" conceit influenced later works such as the Pseudo-Roman Penitential

(ca. 830).⁴⁵ The analogy with surgery is apt, as auricular confession that became common in Anglo-Saxon England would have entailed a detailed, thorough examination of the sinner, which was meant both to elicit confession of sins and, as Frantzen points out, to quiz the sinner on basic religious doctrine.⁴⁶ In its portrait of the voice as both the pus (*worsm*) that fills the silent person's wound and also the agent that can foster health in the sinner, the *Hierdboc* ascribes to the voice two complementary functions: a poison as well as a remedy. In its negative manifestation as pus, the silent person's voice is relocated from its proper source in the mouth to an internal wound, an image meant to impress on its audience the urgent need for confession. The voice is thus always in use; the sinner needs to ensure that he is exercising it properly.

The voice's ventriloquial relocation from the silent person's mouth to his heart and its movement back to its proper source in the mouth helps illuminate the sequence of voices at play in the series of verbal admonishments that the *Hierdboc* predicts. The text features the priest castigating the silent person, who does likewise to the loquacious sinner, who then confesses his sins. This image suggests how the question-and-answer format that underpinned auricular confession would have fostered a vocal exchange between the clergy and the laity that implied their voices' interdependence. In effect, the silent person forfeits control over his voice in his reliance on the priest's verbal correction to perform his own. And when the silent person points out his neighbor's sins, he tacitly invokes the clerical voice as a model for his own. Given this scene's context in the *Hierdboc*'s detailed instructions on how the priest should use his voice to admonish sinners, the silent person who verbally corrects his neighbor can be seen as disseminating the priest's influence and power. This lay ventriloquism of the clerical voice, however, is double-edged, for in correcting his neighbor's sins the once-silent layperson both enhances and also usurps the power of the priest's voice. Although specific to this contrived case, the availability of the priest's voice described in the *Hierdboc* discloses a ventriloquial dynamic in which the laypeople can in fact exert mastery over the clerical voice.

The Priest's Voice and Ventriloquial Control

The interdependence of the priest's and lay people's voices in a confessional context is addressed in Ælfric's homily "*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*" (*Catholic Homilies* II.36), which lays out in more practical terms how the priest's voice can fall under the laity's control. Ælfric's concern about the clerical voice's proper use is evident not only in his insistence that all priests should preach but also in his composition and organization of

a cycle of vernacular homilies. As Godden notes, Ælfric reacted against earlier vernacular homilies such as the Blickling and Vercelli collections because of their "sensational narratives which were clearly fictitious and in some cases of dubious morality."⁴⁷ Thus, in his vernacular homilies, we see him make a concerted effort to establish the priest as a fit medium for the divine voice. As I will suggest later in this chapter, "*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*" enjoins even the priest delivering this sermon to listen to his own voice while delivering it. To be sure, this occasion honoring the apostles was an appropriate one on which to address the clerical obligation to carry out pastoral care and, by extension, to examine the workings of the clerical voice. Ælfric adopted this homily from Gregory, who capitalized on the occasion to draw into relief the failures of contemporary priests. Of Ælfric's revision of Gregory's homily, Godden remarks that "he concentrates instead on the positive aspects of the relationship between the clergy and the laity."⁴⁸ Close inspection reveals that this "relationship" in fact has dire consequences for the clerical voice. Ælfric's intention to portray the laity's negative influence on the clergy and their voices is apparent in how he reworks Gregory's text. He trims the part of the homily that treats the clergy's deficiencies and reorganizes it so that the laity's failings precede the clergy's.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Ælfric poignantly remarks on a particular clerical shortcoming, their inability to use their voices properly, a circumstance he portrays in terms of lay control over the clerical voice.

"*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*" warns the priest that he must use or lose his voice, that is, correct the people's sins or else fall silent because of them. To make this point, Ælfric quotes a divine warning from Hebrew Scripture about the need to redress the sins of one's neighbor: "Ic do þæt þin tunge clifað to ðinum góman. and ðu bist dumb. na swa swa ðre-agende wer. for ðan þe seo hiwræden is swiðe ðwyr" ("I will make thy tongue cleave to your palate, and thou shall be dumb, not as a reproving man, because your household is so depraved"). Ælfric interprets this passage from Ezekiel thus: "ðe bið seo bodung oftogen. for ðan ðe þæt folc me mid yfelum dædum tyrigð. and nis wyrðe þære soþfæstnysse tihtinge" ("Preaching shall be withdrawn from you [priests], because the people vex me [God] with evil deeds and are not worthy of truthful accusations").⁵⁰ Invoking Ezekiel's comments about preaching in a culture marked by an investment in auricular confession allows Ælfric to portray a ventriloquial paradigm that underlies an errant confessional dynamic, such that the people's sins can silence the clerical voice if the lay people are not redressed by this voice. To say that the people are guilty of "evil deeds" and thus "not worthy of truthful accusations" undermines the logic governing auricular confession practiced in Anglo-Saxon England. We must assume that

Ælfric is using a bit of reverse psychology, invoking this scriptural text to impress upon his audience the importance of the contemporary confessional model and the use of the voice that it entails.

The same homily offers insight into the confessional voice's proper use through Ælfric's explanation of a passage from Hosea that describes a tradition governing the priest's execution of his pastoral care duties. Ælfric interprets an ancient custom that was predicated on a give-and-take relationship in which the priest could receive sustenance from the people for his preaching. This circumstance in fact allows the people to control whether the priest can keep on preaching. The channeling of outside resources into the voice by way of the stomach evokes the ventriloquists' act of swallowing air to manufacture prophetic "voices" in their bellies. Thus, the negative aspects of pagan ventriloquial practices threaten the integrity of this legitimate exchange between the laity and the clergy. The exchange that Ælfric relates does not work if the priest ingests the people's food yet does not follow through by producing a voice that corrects their sins:

Se ðe bodað for ðam intingan ðæt he his drihtnes hæse and willan gefremme. and for his neode bigleofan of ðære bodunge nimð. ne dera him nan ðing on ðam ecan eðele. þæt he on wege þyses lifes. andlyfene underfeng; Ac ðam lareowum þæt is biscopum. and mæssepreostum and gehwillcum Godes ðeowum is micclum to warnigenne. þæt him ne belimpe se egeslica cwyde. þe se wítega Osee. be sumum cwæð: Peccata populi mei comedunt. Þæt is. hí etað mines folces synna; Godes ðeowas lybbað be ðam lácum ðe geleaffulle men gode offriað for heora synnum. and gif hi etað ða offrunga. and forsuwiað þa gastlican lare. and ða ðingrædene for ðam folce. untwylice hí etað heora synna; Gehadode menn sind godes bydelas. and hwá sceal bodian þone deman toweardne. gif se bydel suwað?⁵¹

[He who preaches for the purpose of fulfilling his Lord's command and wishes can at need take sustenance for his preaching. Because he, over the course of his life, took nourishment (from his people), he will not be negatively affected at all in the afterlife. But for teachers, that is, bishops, Mass-priests, and all God's servants, it is good to take heed that the terrible saying that the prophet Hosea said about some not apply to them: "Peccata populi mei comedunt," that is, "They eat the sins of my people." God's servants live by the gifts that believing men offer to Him for their sins. If they eat those offerings yet remain silent about spiritual teaching and intercession for the people, truly they eat their sins. Ordained men are God's messengers. And who shall preach the Judge's coming if the messenger is silent?]

If the priests do not correct the people's sins, what they eat is not "sustenance for preaching" (*bigleofan of ðære bodunge*) but the sins they should have redressed. Ælfric thus mandates that the priest enact the complementary

oral activities that the ventriloquial economy encompasses—positively exemplified in the monastic practice of *ruminatio*: ingestion that gives way to speech.

Whether Anglo-Saxon priests did in fact sustain themselves with penitential offerings from their lay charges, we should attend to what this condition placed on the voice's use would have signified to them in the broadest sense. Ælfric's interpretation of this passage from Ezekiel says that a priest can be struck mute for his congregation's sins if he does not reprove them. Although the priest in this situation still controls his ability to speak or to be silent, the sustenance provided by the people compromises this control. It represents an external agency that can silence his admonishments. The priest delivering this homily would learn that the power of his voice was in jeopardy, a circumstance that he could remedy through the proper execution of auricular confession, that is, by interrogating lay people about their sins and assigning them penance. As for the lay audience for this homily, it was not meant to recognize its potential control over the clerical voice but rather its position in an optimal ventriloquial economy. The priest's use of his voice to interrogate the lay folk should elicit their own verbal performances in confession.

Ælfric's Silent Days

Ælfric's attention to the negative ventriloquial dynamic in which the people's sinfulness can result in priestly silence is interesting given that he was quite possibly unique in his promotion of *swigdagas*, "silent days." Ælfric's homily cycle includes an entry for Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday that states: "NE MOT NAN MAN SECGAN SPELL. ON ðAM ðRIM SWIGDAGUM" ("No one is allowed to speak a homily on the three silent days").⁵² Scholars including Roberta Frank and Joyce Hill have wondered what Ælfric meant by this practice. Frank argues that Ælfric looked to Amalarius of Metz (d. ca. 850) and Pseudo-Alcuin as sources for this practice. Each writer speaks of the silencing of the church bells, and Amalarius relates this silence to preaching. Frank thus contends that "if the liturgical expositions available to him [Ælfric] insisted that all teaching of the priest should be banned from the divine office during the last three days of Holy Week, and that all bronze bells—said to symbolize preachers—should fall silent, he would have had to go out of his way not to infer that the required muzzling of bells was to be reflected in the silencing of preachers: no tolling, no telling."⁵³ Looking at different sources than Frank does, Hill writes that "Ælfric's confidence that his refusal to preach was based on well-established ecclesiastical practices is hard to understand when one considers both the practices of his Latin

predecessors and of other vernacular homilists and compilers of vernacular homilies in late Anglo-Saxon England.”⁵⁴ She also notes that the compilation was made at Canterbury, which means that it reflects on preaching traditions at one of the major ecclesiastical centers of Ælfric’s time despite the practice’s lack of foundation in Latin and other Anglo-Saxon sources.

It is not my intention to examine the relevance of this practice to Anglo-Saxon piety but rather to use Ælfric’s note as a reference point for understanding his notions of the clerical voice. We get a sense of his investment in interrogating this voice from an eleventh-century copy of his works, which includes a marginal note that takes issue with this practice, perhaps because the observance of *swigdagas* was a monastic convention the glossator wanted to prevent from influencing the customs of secular parishes.⁵⁵ This interpretation makes sense in light of the idea that the priest must certainly preach during Holy Week, a point in the liturgical year, as Hill points out, when the lay people need be most mindful of their sinfulness.⁵⁶ The glossator ascribes to the clerical voice the power to cultivate remorse for sins, a relationship that is also important to Ælfric. So why does Ælfric endorse a custom that involved an abstention from preaching? The significance of Ælfric’s call for silence on the *swigdagas* becomes evident if we recall his discussion of the priest being struck silent for his people’s sins in “*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*.” Unlike in this homily, the lay people do not ventriloquially control the priest’s voice and are not culpable for his silence on the *swigdagas*. Yet, applying the logic of Ælfric’s “*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*” homily to his notion of *swigdagas*, the priest’s silence on these nonpreaching days does indeed reflect on lay religious subjectivity in connoting the sinfulness on which they must meditate. We might view the custom described by Ælfric as entailing a recession of the “acoustic horizon” to exclude all the lay worshippers—not just the weepers but also the hearers, kneelers, co-standers, standers, and those not undergoing penance—from hearing the homily.

We can gain further insight into how Ælfric’s notion of *swigdagas* posits a relationship between clerical silence and the people’s sinfulness from a twelfth-century homily for the first Sunday after Easter.⁵⁷ While this homily suggests that the term “*swigdagas*” was no longer understood as Ælfric used it, it does associate *swigdagas* with private penance, which becomes apparent in the homilist’s sad observation that many people “ne wile noht bi shriftes wissinge bete” (“do not wish to reform according to the confessor’s instructions”).⁵⁸ In turn, the sinner’s state of sinfulness serves to compromise the efficacy of the clerical voice:

and alle þe wile þe he þus lið on his sinne: þe rihte bileue and þe soe luue.
þe he hah to hauen to gode: ben leirede. and slaine on his heorte and þer

þurh he swike to undernimende alle holsum lore . . . and in þat wise lið ure helende on his heorte. also on sepulcre. and swigedð of holsumnesse lore togenes him.

[And all the while he (the sinner) thus lies in his sin, the right belief and true love that he should have given to God lies slain in his heart and thus he ceases to absorb all wholesome teaching. And in that way lies our Savior in his heart, as in the sepulcher, and he withholds in silence wholesome teaching from him.]⁵⁹

The ventriloquial dynamic described in this scene roots the priest's preaching voice in Christ, who is able to withhold it from the sinner. While this homily seems to interpret *swigdagas* differently than Ælfric does, it in fact retains the occasion's basic sense, namely, the association of the preaching voice's silence with lay sinfulness.

The Priest's Voice and the Mysterious Robe

The contingency of the clerical voice on lay sinfulness implicit in Ælfric's "*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*" and in his notion of the *swigdagas* directs our attention to a more fundamental yet equally problematic relationship, that is, between the priest and his own voice, which is epitomized in the *Hierdboc's* chapter on "Hu se lareow sceal bion gesceadwis on his swigean 7 nytwyrðe on his wordum" ("How the priest shall be wise in his silence and helpful in his words").⁶⁰ The chapter begins with a pithy if curious caution from the book of Isaiah, "Dumb dogs cannot bark" (*Dumbe hundas ne magon beorcan*),⁶¹ an aphorism meant to impress upon priests that they should use their voices to preach and to perform confession. The *Hierdboc* elaborates on this aphoristic introduction by noting that potential messengers should gain fortitude from the Holy Spirit's descent on the apostles in the form of tongues, a fabulous representation of a multiplicity of preaching voices that serves to identify each of the apostles foremost as a sound maker:

Forðæm se ðe ðone sacerhad onfehð, he onfehð friccan scire 7 foreryneles ða her iernað beforan kyningum, 7 bodigeað hire færelt 7 hiera willan hlydende. Sua sculun ða sacerdas nu faran hlydende 7 bodiende beforan ðæm egeslican deman ðe him suiðe andrysnlic æfter gæð. Gif ðonne se sacred bið ungerad ðæs lareowdomes, hwæt forstent ðonne his gehyld? Hwæt mæg he bodigean ma ðonne se dumba fryccea? Ac for ðeosum wæs geworden ðæt se halega gæst on tungena onlicnesse gesette ofer þa apostolas, forðæm butan tweon ðone þe he gefylð he gedeð ðæt he bið swiðe hræde ymbe hine sprecende.⁶²

[He who undertakes the priesthood undertakes the office of herald and footmen who run before kings, loudly proclaiming their journey and will.

Thus priests ought to run, proclaiming loudly before the awful judge, who follows them in great majesty. What if the teacher is unskilled in instruction? What comes about from his cry? What more can he proclaim than the dumb herald? And so it happened that the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues settled on the apostles. Therefore, without hesitation, the one whom He fills He does so that he very readily speaks about Him.]

The priest's routine use of his voice to carry out pastoral care does nothing less than announce the Lord's coming. He heralds his lord's will, an image that not only implies how the priest's vocal performance derives *de ore Domini* but also characterizes the priest's function solely in terms of this particular vocal performance.

The *Hierdboc* goes on to say that this definitive association between the priest and his voice underlies a relevant practice explained in the book of Exodus:⁶³

Forðæm wæs beboden Moyse ðæt se sacerð sceolde bion mid bellum behangen. Ðæt is ðæt he hæbbe þa stefne ðære lare, þylæs he abelge mid ðære suigean ðone dom ðæs Sceawares. Hit is awriten ðæt he scolde inngongende 7 utgongende beforan Gode to ðæm halignessum beon gehiered his sug, þylæs he swulte. Hit is gecueden ðæt se sacerð scolde sweltan, gif se sweg nære of him gehiered ægðer ge ingongendum ge utgongendum, forðon he geniet ðone dieglan deman to irre, gif he inngæð butan ðæm swege ðære lare.⁶⁴

[Therefore Moses was commanded that the priest should be adorned with bells, that is, he was to have the sound of preaching, lest with silence he offend the divine decree. It is written that, when he was going in and out before God to the sanctuary, his sound should be heard, lest he should die. It is said that the priest was to die if his sound was not heard when he was going in and coming out (of the sanctuary) because he compels the hidden judge to ire if he enters without the sound of preaching.]

Understanding the phenomenology that informs this scene illuminates the implications of the *Hierdboc*'s location of the priest's power in his voice. As this custom is described in the book of Exodus, the priest wears a robe adorned with bells as he enters the religious space of the sanctuary (*halignessum*), a clerical arena sealed off from the public.⁶⁵ When the priest crosses into and out of the physical space of the *sanctum sanctorum*, the "sound of preaching" (*swege ðære lare*) that presages his own preaching voice (*stefne ðære lare*) is heard, a circumstance that evokes the priest's act of heralding his lord's impending vocal performance described elsewhere in the *Hierdboc*. In an Anglo-Saxon context, the relationship between these two sounds denotes the priest's obligation to exhibit his definitive

association with his voice by staging vocal performances. What's more, by wearing a robe with bells, the priest uses its sound-making capacity to appropriate religious space just as the devil attempted to do in Benedict's Monte Cassino monastery. More importantly, the priest draws those present at this acoustic performance into his sphere of power. Simply put, the people's attention will be attracted to the priest because they have heard his robe behung with bells, a curious apparatus designed to involve them in what Rick Altman calls the "sound hermeneutic." To explain this idea, Altman points out that upon hearing a sound, one immediately investigates its source ("What was that?").⁶⁶ Thus, the sound not only requisitions space but also sets up a dynamic that automatically interpolates the recipient. Because sound travels and suggests its source even when one is physically remote from it, the priest's bell-hung robe can disseminate his presence and attract attention even when his audience is not looking at him.

Yet, although the bells serve to enhance the listeners' experience of the priest's voice, implicit in the bells' use is the notion that his voice in fact requires such augmentation, that it will somehow fail to be effective without them. We can recognize how the robe signifies the ambiguous potential of the priest's preaching if we regard the bells' "sound of preaching" as a ventriloquial relocation of the clerical voice. While the robe's sound of preaching is meant to amplify the priest's verbal performance, it also risks becoming mere ventriloquial mimicry of his voice.⁶⁷ This would detract from the audience's firsthand experience of the priest's voice, a circumstance that calls to mind post-technological concerns about the relationship of copies to the original master recording. As Walter Benjamin has famously noted, an original work of art has about it a unique aura, which it loses if it undergoes technological reproduction and mass distribution.⁶⁸ So, on the one hand, when the bells' "sound of preaching" announces the priest's "voice of preaching," the priest's definitive voice has been replaced by a multitude of bells, a technological improvement intended to amplify the priest's voice that instead threatens its integrity. However, on the other hand, the fear that sound-reproduction technology will distort the clerical voice assumes the primacy of personal interaction, a paradigm that does not—cannot—apply to the preaching voice, which is designated to transmit messages from an invisible and absent God.

Furthermore, we must remember that the voice's very association with a face-to-face presence that is potentially compromised by technological enhancement is itself a product of Christian tradition (indebted, wittingly or not, to pagan beliefs in ventriloquism), which needs to identify the absent God in his voice. The voice's association with personal presence is

itself a construct, a fact that becomes evident by examining the perceived capacity of nineteenth-century sound technology to afford listeners contact with deceased speakers through their recorded voices. In modern voice-reproduction technology's eschatological significance, Jonathan Sterne perceives a cultural investment in new mortuary practices of preserving the dead body that "constituted both an implicit enshrinement of the voice's 'source' and a desire to contain the body in some wise, namely, through its putatively perdurable voice."⁶⁹ As I discussed in [Chapters 1 and 2](#), Anglo-Saxon England likewise nursed a culturally specific desire to imagine personal presence as well as immortality through the voice, namely, by positing its role in epitomizing the individual on doomsday, which we see in religious texts such as *Ascension (Christ II)*, *Doomsday (Christ III)*, *Soul and Body II*, *Judgment Day I*, and *The Descent into Hell*. Thus, the construct of imagining God as present in his voice as well as the constituent idea of positing the dead in theirs speaks not to any essential element of the voice but rather to its paradoxical nature, which I addressed in [Chapter 1](#). Ultimately, Alfred here admits to an anxiety about the bells' ability and, by extension, the priest's to convey the divine voice to the lay listeners.

More consequential and complicated than the robe's effect on the lay audience is its impact on the priest himself. Whether priests wore such robes in Anglo-Saxon England, this image from Exodus suggests a tantalizing scene: the priest listening to the sound of his own voice. With this robe behung with bells in mind, I inquire: how do Anglo-Saxon pastoral texts portray the priest as audience for his own voice? A clergyman who read the *Hierdþoc's* discourse on the voice's power—including the explication of the robe in Exodus—was meant to recall it when using his own voice to execute pastoral care. We get insight into such a vocal performance in Ælfric's "*In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum*": the priest would preach about preaching and thus be enlisted as a witness to his own sound-making. The priest's act of listening to his own voice when performing pastoral care anticipates a phenomenon that commentators have ascribed to modern inventions such as the phonograph, technology that putatively changed the way the voice was listened to by allowing a speaker to hear his or her own voice.

Dumb Dogs

Helpful in further illuminating the Anglo-Saxon cultural investment in the clerical voice's personality and dissemination and the priest's own awareness of these is the convenient and illuminating analogy between two distantly related speakers: the "mute dog" (*dumba hund*) mentioned

in Anglo-Saxon homiletic literature and the "talking dog" from the "His Master's Voice" (HMV) logo for the Radio Corporation of America (RCA).⁷⁰ I have mentioned the *Hierdþoc's* reference to the mute dog that comes at the start of the chapter entitled "How the priest shall be wise in his silence and helpful in his words," immediately before the description of the robe hung with bells. The mute dog also appears elsewhere in Ælfric's writings, such as in his pastoral letter to Wulfsgie III. Writing to commemorate the founding of a Benedictine abbey at Sherborne as well as to respond to Wulfsgie's request for guidance, Ælfric pronounces this warning: "Ða dumban hundas ne magon beorcan. We sceolan beorcan 7 bodigan þam læwedum, þe læs hy for larlyste losian sceoldan" ("Dumb dogs cannot bark. We must bark and preach to the lay folk, lest they be lost for want of instruction").⁷¹ This odd image from the book of Isaiah portrays the clerical voice's use as both urgent (for pastoral care) and also strange (for its relocation to a nonverbal entity).

Ambiguity about the voice's efficacy likewise underlies the HMV glyph of the talking dog. The designation "talking dog" is in fact erroneous, for the dog is not talking but rather listening, putting his ear to the phonograph's horn to hear "his master's voice." The misnomer "talking dog," however, is significant in that it evokes a curious condition cultivated by the voice's normal use. When speaking, one talks and simultaneously listens to oneself talk, a phenomenon that Derrida called *s'entendre parler*. While modern technology that allowed one to listen to one's own voice on a record augmented this cooperation of listening and speaking, it merely drew into relief how speakers had always listened to their own voices, overheard themselves talk wittingly or not.⁷² Homilies that ascribe to the priest the dual role of speaker and listener cultivate a vexed relationship between his voice and him, for although one naturally listens to one's own voice when one speaks, doing so on purpose is disorienting. Proof of this lies in the fact that when listening to ourselves on a tape or record, our own voices sound strange to us. The listener's natural reaction is to try to disown his or her own voice by making a face that seems to say, "I didn't make that voice. This face made that voice."⁷³ This disorientation wrought by listening to the recorded voice highlights a disjunction in the voice's routine use: between the one who speaks (from the inside out) and the one who hears the one who speaks (from the outside in).⁷⁴ The talking dog that does not really talk but only listens thus demonstrates the entrenchment in and estrangement from the voice effected by the simple act of speaking. Entrenchment: because the speaker not only talks but also listens, listens so attentively that he or she overlooks his own act of listening. Estrangement: because there is no such animal as a talking dog. Indeed, Little Nipper is a "mute dog" who

could never possess the powers of speech reserved for humans and their talking machines.

In a similar way, the mute dog of Anglo-Saxon directive literature also suggests the speaker's estrangement from his own voice. Like the talking dog, the mute dog unleashed by the prophet Isaiah and adopted by Gregory, Alfred, and Ælfric is also an impossibility, for to describe a dog in terms of its silence is to invoke its capacity for speech. And although Ælfric holds out hope that this dog can "bark and preach to the laity" (*beorcan 7 bodigan þam læwedum*), his explication of the image does not suggest facility but rather discomfort in using the voice. In becoming the audience for his own preaching voice, the priest would identify with his audience "out there," as any speaker does. This particular instance of allo-identification with the mute dog implicates his lay audience, his congregation of unlearned charges (*læwedum*) characterized by their need to hear the priest's voice because of their ignorance, a condition that consigns the vocal priest to a disempowered subject position.

In addition to enduring the disorientation of being an audience for his own voice, the priest who delivered a homily was estranged from his voice in yet another way. The HMV glyph shows how. The dog does not listen to its own speech but to his absent master's voice on a recording. In early versions of this logo, the phonograph resembles a coffin, a detail that has provoked the morbid conclusion that the dog's master is in fact dead.⁷⁵ If the master is taken for dead, when the talking machine reads the master's voice from the phonographic record, it engages in ventriloquism in the traditional sense of the word, that is, by conjuring the master's voice so as to bring him "back to life." The voice of an absent master resounds in the scene of preaching as well. The priest delivering a homily listens to a prescribed record of absent voices, that is, to the sources for his text. We observe self-reflection on such playback in Gregory's Easter Sunday homily. As he does in his Easter Monday homily, Gregory opens this homily by disclosing that his voice's power has been compromised by a sore throat. Thus, he must forgo his usual preaching practice. He will not "read to [his audience] what [he] has dictated" but rather "depart from [his] usual custom and carry out [himself] this explanation of the lessons of the holy gospel during the sacred solemnity of the Mass, not dictating but addressing [them] in person." Whereas in the Easter Monday homily the sore throat restricted the acoustic horizon, in this homily Gregory's "sore throat" functions as a conceit for how he believes his voice will be compromised by using prescribed sources as opposed to staging a more spontaneous, unique homiletic performance.

The Priest's Voice and His Use of Sources

Whether Gregory truly believed that speaking from sources would negatively affect his audience's experience of the homily, we must wonder what message he hoped to convey to them in articulating this fear. An answer to this question lies in medieval understandings of reading. When interpreted in light of the *voces paginarum* conceit, Gregory's performance of a prescribed homily composed from sources would serve to make present the voices of those who are absent. Reading from sources could enhance the clerical voice in its relationship to a distant master. However, it could also consign the priest to being nothing but a medium, like a phonograph that witlessly reads a record and automatically sounds its words through its metallic horned mouth. From a Benjaminian point of view, the priest's act of reading an intertextual homily is but an auraless copy rather than an original vocal performance. Although the voice putatively represents expression of personal subjectivity, when recorded it becomes a commodity that its audience can play and replay at their will.⁷⁶ The authenticity of the original source's words, speech that comes *de ore Domini*, thus falls prey to the same vulnerabilities that undermine the value of a master recording when it is copied and disseminated.

In a more practical sense, the value of preaching derived from sources was an important issue in Anglo-Saxon England, given that, as Malcolm Gatch points out, religious writers were heavily reliant on their sources yet not always the most discerning about the writings they consulted and disseminated.⁷⁷ Gatch argues that Anglo-Saxon homilists were not only not critical of their sources but also convinced of a text's authority if it had been attributed (at times, spuriously) to a Church Father, a type of error that can be found in the Blickling and Vercelli homilies. Ælfric warned about the pseudepigraphic *Visio Pauli*, was critical of quoting from the apocryphal New Testament, and was skeptical about hagiographic sources for their blatant exaggerations.⁷⁸ Ælfric was both particularly careful in his use of sources and also concerned more generally about using these scrupulously, which is evident in his own Easter Homily. While Ælfric uses Gregory as a source, he does not include Gregory's admission about his sore throat. Ælfric perhaps recognized how including this material would entail the deleterious use of sources that the sore throat conceit devised by Gregory itself implies. Since one of his goals was accurate dissemination of information, Ælfric had to make sure that his sources were impeccable, for, as Wilcox points out, his homily collections most likely circulated among priests in rural parishes with low-level literacy.⁷⁹ They would have had the ingenuity to do little more than ventriloquize what was written by Ælfric. The text from which the priest's ventriloquial

performance derived, the *Catholic Homilies*, had to make perfect use of sources, lest error be disseminated on a wide scale.

Ælfric's concern about the relationship between a text and its original source is evident in his preface to the book of Genesis. Aware that his own text will circulate, he directs the copier to get it right: to stay faithful to the master copy and not introduce error. As Godden notes, Ælfric articulates this anxiety in the preface to his first work, the first series of *Catholic Homilies*, where he says that he is concerned how many English books (*manegum Englisum bocum*) contain *gedwyld*, heresy or folly.⁸⁰ And despite (or perhaps, in service of) his goal to educate the laity, Ælfric was also cautious, as Gatch argues, about the mass distribution of texts that were normatively monastic domain, including the Bible.⁸¹ In his preface to Genesis, Ælfric reveals his fears to his patron Æthelweard (d. ca. 998) about how in completing this commissioned work he has relinquished control over his master copy:

Nu þincð me, leof, þæt þæt weorc is swiðe pleolic me oððe ænigum men to underbeginne, for þan þe ic ondræde, gif sum dysig man þas boc ræt oððe rædan gehyrð, þæt he wille wenan, þæt he mote lybban nu on þære niwan æ, swa swa þa ealdan fæderas leofodon þa on þære tide ær þan þe seo ealde æ gesett were, oþþe swa swa men leofodon under Moyses æ.⁸²

[Now it seems to me, friend, that that work is very dangerous for me or any other man to undertake, because I fear that, if some ignorant man reads this book or hears it read, he will think that he might live now under the new law as the ancient fathers lived then in that time before the old law was established or how men lived under Moses' law.]

Reproducing this biblical text is dangerous (*pleolic*), Ælfric warns, for an ignorant audience might derive an incorrect message after reading it or hearing it read (*þas boc ræt oððe rædan gehyrð*). For instance, after a foolish person (*dysig man*) is exposed to the book of Genesis, one behavior he might wish to try out is polygamy. In light of the argument that Ælfric is making, his choice of scriptural perversity is telling; the polygamous husband epitomizes the perils of maximized availability that Ælfric says could befall his translated text. In turn, the polygamous union introduces a disruptive variable into biological lineage, a circumstance that mimics the text's corruption by the indiscriminate reader. Simply put, Ælfric is concerned that his audience will engage in an unlawful relationship with his translation—that a man who hears Genesis will take delectable passages out of context rather than appreciate the text holistically and within its cultural context. In articulating his particular concern that an illiterate man who hears the text will corrupt its message, Ælfric speaks

to Derrida's critique of phonocentrism, a mode of interpretation that presumes that although a written text risks misinterpretation once it leaves its author's hands, the speaking voice connotes unproblematic access to the speaker's original meaning. The spoken word of course can also be taken out of context, a circumstance that would wreak the disastrous consequences that Ælfric envisions. Ultimately, what Ælfric fears is ventriloquism in its worst sense: repetition without full comprehension.

Ælfric and the Witch

In light of Ælfric's concerns about the potential corruption that his translation of Genesis may undergo, it is no surprise that he chose as the subject of one of his homilies the Witch of Endor, a ventriloquist whose communications were fraught with ambiguity. Ælfric relates the familiar story: the Witch convinces King Saul that the wise Samuel has come back from the dead to counsel him:

Ac se deofol gehiwode hine sylfne swa on þæs witegan gelicnysse, and to þære wiccan spræc, and sæde þam cyninge, þu scealt beon mid me nu tomergen on minre wununge.⁸³

[But the devil transformed himself into the likeness of the wise man, spoke to the Witch, and said to the king, "You shall be with me tomorrow in my dwelling place."]

Note that Ælfric attends in particular to the stages of ventriloquial mediumship that this message undergoes—from the devil, to the witch, to Saul—evidence of his investment in the faithful dissemination of his own texts. His exegesis of this story from Hebrew Scripture puts him in dialogue with the early church commentators who raised questions about the circumstances underlying this ventriloquial performance. Was it possible that the figure was in fact the righteous Samuel appearing at the ventriloquist's behest? Could Saul indeed consort with the righteous Samuel even though he had consulted a medium? As I discussed in this book's introduction, the most disastrous implication of this event is how the devil's promise to Saul anticipates the crucified Christ's to the Good Thief recorded in Luke: that he would soon be with him in Paradise (*hodie mecum eris in paradiso*).⁸⁴ The implications of this performance would be devastating: the devil ventriloquizes Christ's voice, takes his words out of context and, most surprisingly, anticipates what Christ is going to say. The devil's ventriloquial performance thus undermines the originary status of Christ's words, which should authenticate all Christian preaching. To put it another way, the devil's preemptive ventriloquism of Christ's

speech is a Benjaminian nightmare: the poor copy not only undermines the original work but also precedes it.

While Ælfric does not address the devil's anticipatory ventriloquism of Christ's words per se, he addresses the issue raised by it in remarking on the authenticity of the devil's words. Ælfric assures his audience that it is in fact the devil speaking—not Samuel—and that the devil in Samuel's shape indeed speaks the truth to Saul: "Her we magon tocnawan þæt se cyning sceolde for hys manfullum dædum to þam deofle becoman, and [for] þam wiccecræfte mid him a wunian" ("Thus, we should recognize that the king must fall in with the devil for his evil deeds and because of witchcraft dwell with him always").⁸⁵ In this comment, we observe Ælfric's ambivalence about this ventriloquial performance, one that evokes his divided mindset on his translation of Genesis and, more broadly, his vernacular translation efforts. On the one hand, Saul will be punished for his misdeed, an event that signifies divine disapproval for his contact with a ventriloquist and the falsification of the divine voice that this performance implies. On the other, Ælfric admits that while the devil's ventriloquial performance is perverse, at least it discloses the truth, a comment that perhaps articulates his fantastic view of textual transmission. Ælfric's interpretation of this Biblical episode thus epitomizes two extremes of the priest's use of his preaching voice. However, given how Ælfric moralizes on the story, that the ventriloquist has unlawfully appropriated Christ's power to resurrect, we must observe in this homily an anxiety about the lability of the voice that, given his investment in pastoral care, has implications for the clerical voice.

I have argued that the voice's perceived ability to requisition space entailed its ability both to draw boundaries between devotional communities in the public penance model and also to redraw those that separate public and private space, including the one between the priest and his lay charges. In fact, the voice's movement between the clergy and the laity—if not managed properly—could result in lay control over the clerical voice. We find further evidence of the dubious effect of the clerical voice in the image of the mute dog, which conveys the urgency as well as the estrangement that the priest's use of his voice involves. The power of the priest's voice could be compromised in a number of practical ways, including his unscrupulous use of sources as well as the removal of his spoken words from their original context by an ignorant lay listener. This particular circumstance is the subject of my next chapter, "Cursed Speakers," which likewise discloses the anxiety that lay speakers will usurp the clerical voice. We can perceive the fundamental investment of *The Friar's Tale* in ventriloquism's pernicious effects in its reworking of the Witch of Endor story that disturbs Ælfric to explain how the priest's voice can be divested of its authority.

CHAPTER 4

CURSED SPEAKERS

Alfred's *Hierdþoc* and the preaching texts by Ælfric are both marked by a cultural interest in pastoral care, carried out by the ministers in Alfred's case and by the parish churches in Ælfric's, circumstances that gave rise to anxieties about how the priest used his voice. As I pointed out in my introduction, Chaucer was also writing in a time characterized by a concerted investment in the priest's voice, albeit borne of different cultural impulses. The changes wrought by the Fourth Lateran Council placed great purchase on the role of preaching and confession, institutions which invested the priest's voice with great power. In addition to the influence of the Council disseminated by church officials such as Peckham (c. 1230-92), Chaucer was also undoubtedly affected by the career of John Wyclif, who emphasized the priest's duty to preach and thus endowed the clerical voice (perhaps unwittingly) with great power. Yet, Wyclif also believed that the rest of the liturgy should be in the vernacular, a situation that would give rise to the potential usurpation of the priest's voice à la singing-shepherd episode that I related in the introduction. Indeed, in Chaucer's time, the power of the clerical voice was complicated by the vernacular language movement that translated Latin works into English, making clerical domain now subject to lay appropriation. So in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale* as in Alfred and Ælfric's works, we see an anxiety surrounding the priest's use of his voice, lest it be appropriated by unauthorized lay worshippers (or an unscrupulous secular clergyman, as the case may be). My desire to follow a particular line of inquiry, that is, the appropriation of the priest's voice by lay people that grew out of, understandably yet ironically, movements to educate the laity, explains my choice of texts.

In *The Friar's Tale*, Chaucer explores the significance of the labile power of the priest's voice most explicitly through the curses of the carter and the old woman, which are overheard by the summoner and the devil.

The carter's curse does not work but the old woman's does; the devil does not spirit away the carter's lazy team but snappily deports the summoner to hell. Given that *The Friar's Tale* includes this trial-and-error experiment with language, critics who have focused on it have been correct in doing so.¹ In this chapter, I contribute to this critical conversation by reading these curses as parodic Eucharistic prayers; I argue that these vulgar speakers ventriloquize sacramental formulas that they would not have been able to hear at Mass. Through curses meant to affect the bodies of the horses and the summoner, Chaucer examines how profane language and vulgar speakers can reveal clerical knowledge and sacred secrets.

This chapter has three parts. The first studies the general question of who has domain over sacred language and how it conveys meaning. To this end, I first attend to the Friar's introduction of the shady summoner, who corrupts confessional speech for personal gain. In effect, the summoner inserts himself into the confessional exchange; he learns about secret sins and then threatens to expose them unless the sinners pay him, a circumstance that reflects the tale's sustained interest in clerical knowledge, authority, and speech. Although the sin of greed motivates the summoner, his distortion of confessional secrecy also undermines the salvific purpose of speech that is described in devotional literature. Reading the summoner as a deviant speaker illuminates his interest in the devil's means of trickery, the "*subtiltee*" (3. 1420) that the devil readily discloses to him in his extended discourse on his ability to possess a wide variety of physical "*formes*" (3. 1471). In the devil's physical concealment, Chaucer explores the relationship between words and their underlying meaning, in particular, devotional formulas. The devil's explanation of his adoption of physical *formes* thus offers Chaucer a premise for examining how the significance of devotional formulas is created, understood, maintained, and undermined by the clerical and lay speakers that utter them.

This chapter's second part examines how a particular type of devotional formula, Eucharistic prayers, is conveyed through human media. The devil's discourse on his *subtiltee* and his appropriation of physical *formes* provide a context for the carter's and widow's curses, which ventriloquize Eucharistic prayers that are usually protected in ritual silence. These ventriloquial performances of liturgical secrets have implications for the significance of sacred language, its audience, and its speakers. While lay people's ventriloquism of sacred prayers is an assertion of power through and over language, it also raises the question of whether the sacred formula's authenticity is jeopardized by their unauthorized renditions.

This chapter's third part analyzes another verbal performance, one in which the old woman preempts the Friar's moral, making it seem as if

he is ventriloquizing her words. In this performance, Chaucer speaks to late fourteenth-century anxieties about the authority of the priest's voice. *The Friar's Tale* ultimately interrogates the very notion of authenticity as it pertains to sacred speech and questions which speakers—if any—are authorized to utter it.

The Summoner and the Devil's *Subtiltee*

Ventriloquism's relevance to the Friar's tale-telling is evident in his *Prologue*, which reflects the clerical desire to protect its control over sacramental verbal performances, lest sacred meaning and mystery—not to mention clerical power—be lost. An unauthorized lay speaker, the Wife of Bath no sooner concludes her tale than the Friar steps in to speak. The Wife's storytelling has already been subject to clerical co-optation, namely, when the Pardoner interrupts her and tries (unsuccessfully) to derail her *Prologue*. This scripturally endorsed apologia for serial matrimony precedes her tale, a pseudo-exemplum in which, as William Kamowski points out, forgiveness is granted without church machinery.² After listening to her tale, the Friar commends her storytelling abilities ["Ye han seyð muche thyng right wel" (3. 1273)] yet tells her "lete auctoritees, on Goddes name,/ To prechyng and to scoles of clergye" (3. 1276-7). In light of her performance, the Friar's impatience is perhaps understandable. The Wife has ventriloquized clerical discourse and thus attempted to usurp clerical power over preaching and confession, institutions that serve to foster the Friar's own control over religious knowledge.

The Friar's Prologue is appropriate to *The Friar's Tale*, which begins with the summoner assuming the confessor's function, arrogating to himself the role of God's proxy in confession.³ Since he is not, however, omniscient as God is, or even institutionally sanctioned to hear confession, the summoner's knowledge and power depend on the prostitutes who "tolde hym al the secree that they knewe" (3. 1341). Indeed, the summoner's interaction with these prostitutes demonstrates how he perverts the verbal performances of auricular confession. Instead of learning about sins via a process resembling auricular confession, he has the prostitutes whisper their sexy secrets in his ear: "whoso it were/ That lay by hem, they told it in his ere./ Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent" (3. 1357-59). The summoner does not keep these sins secret as a confessor should under the "seal of confession" but rather learns of them for the express purpose of exposing them, that is, when blackmailing the male sinner. The secrecy of confession is thus distorted. Karma Lochrie writes that confession was a "ritualized power relationship conducted through secrecy between the one who confesses

and the one who keeps the secrets."⁴ She adds that "[s]ecrecy thus becomes a function of the power relationship . . . rather than a function of the secrets supposedly confided."⁵ The lack of integrity in the summoner's use of clerical secrets not only represents an abuse of his pseudo-clerical power but also suggests how sacrosanct power is in fact easily appropriated.

We can arrive at this conclusion if we remember that the summoner is not the only one in on these confessional secrets. The prostitutes also are. Though instrumental to the summoner's trade, the secrecy in which they traffic seems to envelop the prostitutes themselves. They get but a fleeting mention at the tale's opening and then disappear. Yet, the quirk of circumstance that affords the summoner this pseudo-confessional knowledge—the fact that the prostitutes are beyond his jurisdiction ["yput out of oure cure" (3. 1333)]—also implies how they in fact compromise his authority over this knowledge. Although the summoner's traffic in secret sins suggests a privileged position in a confessional exchange, this knowledge is not "clerical" per se since female sinners acquire it and convey it to him. In turn, the prostitutes' willful production of confessional secrets suggests the contingency of the confessor's knowledge even in an orthodox context. Simply put, the summoner's opportunistic reliance on the prostitutes calls attention to the fact that the confessor relies on the sinner to acquire his clerical knowledge. So although the summoner's actions show that clerical power is in fact available for appropriation, the power that he appropriates is itself contingent on patently disempowered agents.

The pseudo-confessional dynamic at the beginning of *The Friar's Tale* exposes clerical authority and knowledge as labile and thus foreshadows the lay ventriloquism of the clerical voice that occurs later in the tale. Clerical authority is blatantly subverted when the summoner, while looking for his next potential victim, meets up with an entity who is indeed quite sinful: the devil. In light of the summoner's traffic in confessional secrets, his extended exchange with the devil cannot but be read as a perverse auricular confession in which the summoner cross-examines the devil about his tricks-of-the-trade. Given the summoner's proclivity for exposing the sinners' secrets, it seems unjust, yet characteristic of him, that he would try to keep his own identity secret from the devil. The summoner merely avers to the devil's question, "Artow thanne a bailly?" (3. 1392) and thus disguises himself as a bailiff, ironically, as the devil himself also does.⁶

When the summoner does break down and reveal what his real job is, he characterizes his trade as a perversion of orthodox confessional secrecy:

What I may gete in conseil prively
No maner conscience of that have I.

Nere myn extorcioun, I myghte nat lyven,
 Ne of swiche japes wol I nat be shryven.
 Stomak ne conscience ne knowe I noon.
 I shrewe this shrifte-fadres everychoon. (3. 1437–42)

The summoner's disdain for the protocol of confession and, more specifically, his shameless inability to keep secrets starkly contrasts with the devil yeoman's "softe speche" (3. 1412). Chaucer thus insinuates that while the summoner cannot keep secrets, the devil can. And the devil's subdued tone must signal to the summoner that the devil knows lots of secrets. Ever-primed for hearing a lucrative secret, the summoner wastes no time in asking his new friend to disclose what he must be hiding:

Som subtiltee, and tel me feithfully
 In myn office how that I may moost wynne;
 And spareth nat for conscience ne synne
 But as my brother tel me, how do ye. (3. 1420–3)

His disgust for summoners notwithstanding, the Friar's voice emerges through his fictional summoner. When hearing confession, the Friar might well exhort the layperson to "spareth nat" (1422) in telling any sin but instead to reveal everything. The mock-confessional tone of the summoner's petition that the devil share his "*subtiltee*" is significant; it reflects not only the summoner's abuse of sacramental secrecy but also the relevance of religious secrets to the devil's ensuing discourse.

As H. Marshall Leicester Jr. points out, the tale, compared to its analogues, spends a great deal of time on the description of the scene I have just described: the summoner and his meeting with the demon.⁷ What are we supposed to make of this? The summoner's conversation with the fiend, namely, his inability to immediately recognize him and his decision to keep talking to him once he knows the fiend's identity, has elicited a lively critical conversation. Clarence H. Miller notes how the demon's carrying bows and arrows should have signaled his identity to the summoner, as this is a trope found in Jerome, Hildegard of Bingen, and Nicolas of Lyra.⁸ For Gail Ivy Berlin, the summoner's discourse with the fiend evokes the tradition of conversations between holy people and demons. In particular, it calls to mind the *Life of Antony*, which likewise includes a fiend in disguise, a concern with recognizing and identifying the fiend, and an interest in discovering the nature of the fiend's pursuits.⁹ She adds that the demon's appearance as a bailiff, virtually the same persona as the summoner, should have alerted the summoner to his true identity as "deceit through familiarity is a common ruse of the devil."¹⁰

Other critics have wondered at the summoner's calm reaction to the devil's disclosure of his true identity, noting especially the problem with his "psychological credibility,"¹¹ "blind[ness] to spiritual forces in the world generally,"¹² and even the erotically-charged nature of his exchange with the devil.¹³ Most important to my argument is the fact that the summoner not only does not react to being in the company of the fiend but also wants to know his *subtiltee*, which keeps the summoner interested and inspires him to continue his cross-examination. Chaucer's lengthy exposition of the summoner's pseudo-confessional exchange betides the tale's investment in examining the workings and appropriation of clerical power, particularly through language.

To understand what the devil means by the "*subtiltee*" that the summoner desires to know, we should consider the rhetorical sense of the word "*subtilitas*," a term poignantly used by Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) in his *In Librum Beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus Expositio*, a translation of the work of the mystical fifth-century philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius. As these authors use it, the term means "smallness" with the implication of "simplicity," as if an entity had been distilled down to its essence.¹⁴ We get a sense of how the term could have been used in a hermeneutic context in Wyclif's remark that Eucharistic doctrine would be lost on those not disposed to understanding "*arcane Eucharistiae, et subtilitatem Scripturae*," that is, Eucharistic mysteries and the subtleties of scripture.¹⁵ Thus, the meanings of "*subtilitas*" suggest that in the devil's *subtiltee* Chaucer means to interrogate how speakers use language and convey the subtle significance of words. This implied relationship between physical forms and verbal formulas becomes evident in the devil's concluding remarks on how he goes about altering his outward appearance:

Somtyme we feyne, and somtyme we aryse
 With dede bodyes, in ful sondry wyse,
 And speke as renably and faire and wel
 As to the Phitonissa dide Samuel
 (And yet wol som men seye it was nat he;
 I do no fors of youre dyvynytee). (3. 1507–12)

Leicester remarks that the devil's mention of the Witch of Endor (the "Phitonissa") is "somewhat irrelevant."¹⁶ On the contrary, it is in fact highly relevant if we read the tale as being about the ventriloquism of the clerical voice. In this passage, the devil does more than merely outline the pragmatics of getting dead bodies that he will inhabit to deceive his dupes. Dead bodies provide the devil with an organ for his voice, which is apparent in his reference to the wise Samuel's "resurrection" by the

Witch of Endor, known in the Vulgate as *mulier habens Pythonem* after the *pythia* who prophesied at Apollo's oracle.¹⁷

The importance of the *pythia* story to Chaucer is apparent in his reference to it in *The Manciple's Tale*. It begins with Phebus's slaying of the "Phitoun" (9. 109, 128), which became the site at which the *pythia*'s oracle was erected. The Manciple mentions the Python's defeat in order to vouch for the skill that Phebus now channels into his "minstrelcy" (9. 114), which in Chaucer's time connoted not only music but also a form of frivolous speech deemed especially reprehensible.¹⁸ The Python's ventriloquial heritage is also manifest in Phebus's crow, whose speech conveys knowledge that would have been better left unsaid.¹⁹ In his reference to the Python in *The Manciple's Tale*, Chaucer alludes to an oracle that epitomized pagan depravity for its distortion of divine revelation as well as the voice's God-given purpose.

In a similar way, the devil's allusion to the *Phitonissa* in *The Friar's Tale* directs our attention to the ventriloquial performances staged later in it, namely, the carter's and the old woman's ventriloquism of clerical speech. The devil's extensive discourse about his ability to appropriate physical forms provides Chaucer with a premise for exploring the nature and use of ventriloquized verbal formulas. When the devil reveals to the summoner his true identity ["I am a feend; my dwelling is in hell" (3. 1448)], the summoner asks the devil whether he inhabits a physical form in hell as he does on earth. The devil replies:

"Nay certainly," quod he, "ther have we noon;
But whan us liketh we kan take us oon,
Or elles make yow seme we been shape;
Somtyme lyk a man, or lyk an ape." (3. 1461–4)

The significance of the devil's occasional ape-like disguise to verbal performances becomes evident if we consider *The General Prologue's* profile of the Pardoner, who "With feyned flaterye and japes/ He made the person and the peple his apes" (1. 705–6). The rhyme associates the foolish "apes" with the perverse verbal performances to trick them; japes was a frequently cited sin of the tongue that entailed foolish speech. The Parson's discourse on this particular verbal sin also connects "apes" and "japes": "japers, that been the develes apes, for they maken folk to laughe at hire japerie as folk doon at the gawdes of an ape" (10. 651). The "develes apes" that engage in "japery" are sinful speakers whose speech not only has a demonic source but also has no human reason behind it, like the tricks performed by trained apes. The implication here is that the japers' entertainment was so mindless that it was easily aped and, in turn,

it was nothing more than aping. In *The Friar's Tale* the devil's admission to appearing "lyk an ape" thus evokes the mimetic, mindless entertainment that pastoral writers alleged he himself had demonically engineered. Indeed, Edwin D. Craun gives a striking example of the devil's masterminding of perverse verbal performances in discussing directive texts that identify minstrels as "*operarii diaboli*."²⁰

In the summoner's reaction to the devil's initial disclosures about his ability to change his physical form, we can recognize the import of the devil's shape-shifting to verbal formulas, liturgical formulas in particular. Upon learning the devil's real identity, the summoner's first reaction tellingly evokes the sacred mysteries of the Mass: "'A!' quod this somonour, 'benedicite! What sey ye?/ I wend ye were a yeman trewely./ Ye han a mannes shap as wel as I'" (3. 1456–58). The devil's adoption of a "mannes shap" (1458) and appearance "lyk a man" (1464) suggests a demonic simulation of the Eucharistic transubstantiation and, in turn, draws attention to the ventriloquial nature of orthodox liturgy itself. Indeed, by the time Chaucer was writing, the priest's ventriloquism included his recitation of the liturgy's prayers as well as a reenactment of Christ's sacrifice. As Mary M. Schaefer points out, liturgical manuals for the clergy reflect the fact that from the twelfth century on the Mass had shifted from being a mere commemoration of Christ's sacrifice to a performance in which the priest identified with Christ.²¹ And late medieval devotional texts such as Robert Mannyng's *Meditation on the Supper of Our Lord*, the *Northern Passion*, the *Southern Passion*, and the *Cursor Mundi* note Christ's institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper, thus representing it as a performance that served as a prototype for liturgical renditions of it. The *Memoriale Credencium*, a fourteenth-century manual for lay people compiled on the basis of Archbishop John Peckham's (d. 1292) syllabus, is remarkable for explaining the power inherent in the priest's ventriloquism of Christ's words: "No wondur þanne þeyȝ þe worde þat crist spak him self a Scherthursday at nyȝt in his cene among his disciples and ȝaf powere to prestis to speke þat same word in his name: hit turneth bred into goddus body."²² In *The Friar's Tale*, the appearance of a spiritual (albeit impious) entity in "mannes shap" (3. 1458) suggests a perversion of the priest's ritual impersonation of Christ at Mass. This liturgical role-playing also resonates in the devil's claim that he appears "[s]ometyme lyk a man, or lyk an ape" (1464). Christ himself was present "lyk a man" at the Last Supper and now "lyk an ape" in the priest (via Chaucer's well-documented anticlericism) who ventriloquizes Christ's words during the Eucharistic celebration.

The ventriloquial nature of religious worship is an issue to which Chaucer pays significant attention elsewhere in *The Canterbury Tales*. For

example, in the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, the alchemist makes the priest his "ape" (8. 1313) by selling him on a bogus alchemical experiment. The word "ape" suggests several levels of ventriloquism underlying this hoax. The canon himself apes a priest when he performs his secret alchemical rites to transform base metal into gold, a performance that, as Joseph E. Grennen notes, simulates the transubstantiation.²³ In turn, the designation "ape" for the hoodwinked priest intimates how liturgical mimesis could tend toward mindlessness, a fact evident in criticisms of the clergy made by orthodox writers such as Cæsarius of Heisterbach and Jacobus de Voraigne. Cæsarius gives witness to bogus priests who have no religious training but can say Mass through "ape-like" mimicry of real priests in ventriloquial performances that surely compromise the miracles Cæsarius so voluminously records.²⁴ Jacobus de Voraigne in *The Golden Legend* reports how the holy blissful martyr himself perhaps suspected such ventriloquial aping was afoot when he removed a priest deemed "witless and without conscience" because he celebrated the Mass in honor of the Virgin Mary everyday.²⁵

Further proof of Chaucer's interest in liturgical ventriloquism can be found in the Nun's Priest's description of Chanticleer's voice. His crowing sounds like Mass bells and is truer than a clock's chimes ["His voys was murier than the murie orgon/ On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon./ Wel sikerer was his crowyng in his logge/ Than is a clokke or an abbey orlogge" (7. 2849–53)], an image that associates the liturgy with automation. If Chaucer viewed religious worship as ventriloquial, he describes it as self-consciously so in *The Prioress's Tale*. In the little clergeon's painstaking practice of the Marian hymn *O Alma Redemptoris*, he struggles to reproduce a sound that he cannot understand and, for his efforts, the angry Jews cut his throat. As Bruce Holsinger notes, his ventriloquism met with such violence evokes the strenuous training of "boy bishops" who stood in for the priest and ventriloquized parts of the Mass.²⁶ In mimicking the priest, these boy bishops drew into relief the self-consciously mimetic nature of the Mass.

In *The Friar's Tale*, the devil's discourse on his adoption of physical forms discloses how these ventriloquized liturgical forms have the power to avenge themselves on their audience and speakers. The devil explains to the summoner why he adopts a particular physical appearance: "'For we,' quod he, 'wol us swiche formes make/ As moost able is oure preyes for to take'" (3. 1471–2). By "*formes*," the devil could mean "physical bodies," except that the word "*preyes*" has an additional meaning that is relevant to religious worship. Taken together, "*formes*" and "*preyes*" signify formal religious prayers and the unsuspecting prey taken in by these. The little

clergeon's ventriloquial mastery of the Latin hymn in *The Prioress's Tale* reveals the seductiveness of these *formes*:

And as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,
 And herked ay the wordes and the noote,
 Til he the firste vers koude al by rote.
 Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,
 For he so yong and tender was of age. (7. 520–4)

Like the Prioress, the little clergeon characterizes his desire to learn the hymn in terms of hearing and recitation:

"This song, I have herd seye,
 Was maked of our blissful Lady free
 Hire to salve, and eek hire for to preye
 To been oure help and socour whan we deye.
 I kan namoore expounde in this mateere.
 I learne song; I kan but small grammere." (7. 531–6)

In explaining his motivations for wanting to learn the song, he confesses that he is unable to repeat more than the little bit that he has heard due to his "small grammere" (536). Interestingly, the Jews are disturbed by his singing yet are not described as hearing the song; nor are the people who discover the clergeon's dead, singing body. Thus, Chaucer foregrounds the little clergeon's hearing of the song and his subsequent ventriloquial performance, two activities that belie his true misunderstanding of the Latin formula.

So what does this ventriloquial performance in *The Prioress's Tale* signify? What kind of relationship between the verbal formula and its speaker does the clergeon's performance imply? On the one hand, ventriloquial mimicry allows the little clergeon to appropriate speech that he could not normally articulate. On the other, the little clergeon repeats the song and knows much of it, and yet still its meaning eludes him. The discursive mastery is thus not the little clergeon's but, oddly enough, the Latin song's. Just as the devil adopts human *formes* in which to hide himself in *The Friar's Tale*, so the song relies on the little clergeon to articulate its form, though its underlying meaning remains hidden from him. To put it another way, his own singing voice publicizes the song's message yet cooperates with the verbal formula's inscrutability to conceal the song's significance from him, its speaker. This phenomenon is manifest when the little clergeon's voice broadcasts the Latin song's words as he passes through the Jewish ghetto, where his song is heard and understood with disastrous consequences.

The full import of the little clergeon's poorly received ventriloquial performance becomes apparent when we recognize Lee Patterson's point that it is in fact but one of several in *The Prioress's Tale*, which includes the Prioress's (and ultimately, Chaucer's) ventriloquism of the Mass of the Holy Innocents, a liturgy that included an elaborate procession that is emulated in the clergeon's transgression of the Jewish ghetto.²⁷ As Patterson argues about the Holy Innocents' ventriloquism that is depicted in Revelation, "The *cantus Agni* they sing before the Lamb is such speech that proceeds not from but through them: they are vehicles for the transmission of a song that has divine origin."²⁸ This performance on the feast of the Holy Innocents was in turn informed by Christian contact with the Jewish belief in *kiddush ha-Shem*, the notion that the death of a righteous person is an act of atonement.²⁹ Although the Mass and the biblical story of the Holy Innocents would have been familiar if not apparent analogs to Chaucer's tale, the Jewish belief with which they resonated would have been lost on most of Chaucer's audience who heard or read it. Like the little clergeon with his Latin hymn, Chaucer's audience would not apprehend the tale's underlying significance. The little clergeon's ventriloquism of the words of the Latin song thus illustrates how eloquent forms can attract attention only to flaunt the fact that their audience cannot fully penetrate them.

In *The Friar's Tale*, the devil's easy ability to adopt *formes* to disguise himself speaks to contemporary concerns about the lay people's relative capacity to comprehend religious worship. The elaborate liturgical rituals that were becoming more common in fourteenth-century England elicited a comment from Wyclif, who was adamant that the laity as well as the celebrating priest needed to understand worship:

"Wonder it is whi men preisen so moche þis newe preiynge, bi gret cryynge and hey song, and leven stille manere of preynge, as Crist and his apostils diden. It semeþ þat we seken our owene likynge and pride in þis song more þan þe devocion and understondynge of þat þat we syngen, and þis is grete synne. For Austyn seiþ in his confessions, As oft as þe song delitiþ me more þan þat is songen, so oft I knowleche þat I trespasse grevously. Perfore seiþ Poul, I have levere fyve wordis in my witt þan ten þousand in tonge. Poulis witt is in devocion and trewe undirstondynge; þe tonge is þat a man undirstondiþ not, and haþ no devocioun. O Pater Noster seyng wiþ devocion and goode understondynge, is beter þan many þousand wiþouten devocion and undirstondynge."³⁰

Like the devil's *forme* that masks his demonic essence, the vocalization of the "hey song" can mask its underlying significance from its speaker. Since common people "undirstandiþ not" the Latin language, Wyclif

regards such worship as not conducive to true “devocion.” In a related yet slightly different vein, Wyclif argued that singing impeded lay understanding of prayers and could even give them headaches.³¹ Despite his historical reception as a champion for the lay worshipper, Wyclif’s critique of formal impediments to comprehension addresses the widely held notion that lay listeners were *simplices* who could not fully grasp sacred meaning, evident in the (putatively) lay-centered orthodox position that unlearned worshippers needed clerical glossing to clarify scripture’s significance. For Wyclif, an alternative to lay mimicry of Latin formulas that they do not understand is reciting the *Pater Noster* in English.

Although Wyclif alleges that lay worshippers can perform the Our Father with “devocion and undirstondynge,” the prayer’s presentation in John Thoresby’s *Lay Folk’s Catechism* promises less and expects less from the lay worshippers. He describes this vernacular language prayer that everyone should know in terms of its formal impediments: “to comprehend so moche wyt in playn words ys a sotylte of God passyng the wyt of man.”³² The rhetoric used to depict this prayer reveals that it confounds its audience just as much as Latin formulas do. The prayer’s *wyt* (i.e., “wisdom”) is so great that it surpasses the *wyt* (i.e., “comprehension”) of humans. The prayer thus seems to guarantee its intelligibility yet ultimately demands reiteration that is witlessly ventriloquial. Just as the significance of *O Alma Redemptoris* remained hidden from the little clergeon even as he sang it, so does the Our Father’s divine *sotylte* elude its audience members even when they recite the prayer in the vernacular.

In *The Friar’s Tale*, we can observe an impetus to parade yet safeguard discursive *sotylte* in the devil’s partial concealment of his *subtiltee* from the summoner. When the summoner presses him about the particulars of his shape-shifting, the devil avoids his question: “For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare/ To understonde, although I tolde hem thee” (3. 1480–1). Due to his impoverished sense of comprehension, the summoner can intuit the *subtiltee*’s existence but not its exact substance, which will prove damning at the tale’s end when he is taken to hell to learn through his “owene experience” (3. 1517) about demonic trickery. In contemplating the summoner’s fate, we must remember that the devil has in fact disclosed his identity quite plainly: “I am a feend; my dwellyng is in helle” (3. 1448). The summoner’s decision to consort with the devil (albeit disguised as a bailiff) would be like the little clergeon singing the Marian hymn with perfect comprehension while walking through the Jewish ghetto. However, is this alternative scenario so radically different than the clergeon’s performance of the song with knowledge of its general gist, that it “was maked of our blisful Lady” (7. 532)?

The complex relationship between devotional formulas, their meaning, their performance, their performers, and their audience is one that Chaucer continues to explore when the devil himself addresses the deception that he perpetrates. In answering the summoner's questions, he pauses to meditate on his ability to shape-shift: "It is no wonder thyng thogh it be so;/ A lowsy jogelour kan deceyve thee,/ And pardee, yet kan I moore craft than he" (3. 1466–8). An unsavory character frequently mentioned in pastoral discourse on deviant speech, a *jogelour* was a magician or sleight-of-hand artist who often performed in churchyards after Mass, thus detracting from the sacrament outside the church as the janglers (i.e., idle talkers) did inside it. In directive literature, the *jogelour's* untoward performances were treated along with sins of the tongue. By invoking the figure of the *jogelour*, the devil thus tacitly describes his own "*craft*" as involving the canny manipulation of language. Oddly enough, the source of this perverse performance is God, who himself puts the devil up to it: "For somtyme we [demons] been Goddes instrumentz" (3. 1483). Although we may be tempted to dismiss the devil's remark as mere bragging, theologians contemporary with Chaucer held that recognizing God's unlimited power also meant being aware of his power to deceive. As Dyan Elliott points out, Jean Gerson (1363–1429), for instance, contended that Eucharistic visions could in fact derive from a divine deception that had its most compelling analog in magicians' tricks.³³

In light of *The Friar's Tale's* investment in the production of language, the devil's function as one of God's *instrumentz* suggests that divine deception can be effected through ventriloquism. The implications of this (un)holy ventriloquism are significant, especially given that discourse on ethical speech maintained that verbal performances needed to reflect that God was their source. The notion that God could disguise his voice in demonic *instrumentz* means that the sanctity of his voice and, by extension, that of any voices meant to emulate it, is no longer guaranteed. In a related yet slightly different vein, the Prioress claims that God will choose to perform laud "by the mouth of children" (7. 457), a dicey prospect given what happens to the little clergeon's throat when he sings the Marian hymn. Although the divine voice emanating from well-meaning human *instrumentz* should guarantee their speech, the possibility exists for the voice's inhospitable reception by a rough audience that does not recognize the instrument for divine speech as such.

Thus far, I have addressed the implications of ventriloquism for human subjects who produce and listen to devotional formulas. Ventriloquial performances have particular consequences for their speakers who, while supposedly appropriating or exerting mastery over a verbal formula, are in fact just dummies. An unlearned priest or worshipper can

ventriloquize part of the Mass yet not necessarily understand its full significance, which is concealed in the unintelligible formula. But what are the implications for the ventriloquized formula itself? The example of the little clergeon's uncomprehending ventriloquial performance evokes Walter Benjamin's fear that technology could make copies of art objects that had lost the aura of the original or, perhaps worse yet, copies that by their mere multiplicity compromised the original's authenticity.³⁴ This Benjaminian paradigm is both epitomized by and also subverted in the Mass's conventional performance. On the one hand, these copies are not without an aura of authenticity since Christ himself authorized them at the "first Mass," that is, the Last Supper. On the other, the Mass is a vocal performance known only through ventriloquized copies. Throughout *The Canterbury Tales*, the widespread copying of devotional formulas—by the devil, by the little clergeon, by Chanticleer, by an alchemist, by three avaricious rogues who perform a mock supper to conquer Death—cannot but imply their etiolation.

Institutional anxieties about such lawless, widespread ventriloquism of devotional formulas help account for the Canon's silence. In my introduction, I cited an episode frequently recounted in clerical liturgical manuals as well as the lay text known as *The History of the Mass*. These texts explain that before the Canon was recited in silence, shepherds learned it from hearing it daily, recited the formula over a piece of bread, succeeded in transubstantiating it, and subsequently were struck from heaven. *The History of the Mass* explains that, because of this turn of events, no one but a priest should recite these sacred words.³⁵ A similar caution is found in *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*. The author commends his own exposition of the Mass, which is thorough yet does not include "fyue wordes wipouten drede,/ þat no mon but a prest schulde rede," that is, the transubstantiation formula (*Hoc est enim corpus meum*).³⁶ Devotional texts also disclose the impetus to preserve the sanctity of devotional formulas in their instructions for how the laity should use their voices during Mass, the Canon in particular. Their main advice for the laity during Mass is to stay silent and to refrain from idle talk, that is, "jangling." The Canon's silence thus intimates the depravity of lay voices that would corrupt the prayer by ventriloquizing its words, a disposition for unethical speech that is, in turn, manifest in lay worshippers' jangling.

The summoner himself tacitly acknowledges the value of reverential silence in his allusion to alchemy, a discourse that definitively uses silence as a means of guarding esoteric secrets. He invokes alchemy when probing the devil's changes in physical form: "'Yet tel me,' quod the somonour, 'feithfully,/ Make ye yow newe bodies thus always/ Of elementz?'" (3. 1504–6). The summoner's question about whether the devil makes

neue bodies from *elementz* implies the type of physical change effected through an alchemical manipulation of elements. We get insight into the summoner's alchemical allusion from *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, in which the Yeoman exposes his boss's illicit alchemical practices by telling the pilgrims how an alchemist made a priest his "ape" (8. 1313) because he wished to learn alchemical "subtiltee" (844, 1091). This bogus alchemical knowledge evokes the devil's shady *subtiltee* and, as I have suggested, secret Eucharistic rites that likewise effect physical transformation. Scholars have noted the mythological association of the alchemist's magical "privee ston" (1452) with the Eucharist. And, as Grennen notes, Chaucer's awareness of this connection is reflected in yet also troubled by his depiction of stone idols that are falsely worshipped as gods in the *Second Nun's Tale*, which directly precedes *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*.³⁷ For the purposes of my argument, the most significant point of contact between the Mass's Canon and alchemical experiments [i.e., the "secrees of secrees" (8. 1447)] is the secrecy that enveloped each. In *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale* we observe the Canon's fictional analog acting as a human embodiment of the Mass's Canon in his effort to guard his alchemical secrets. The perceived need for secrecy accounts for why alchemical knowledge was not written down and, likewise, why the words of the Canon were not included in lay people's missals. In recognizing how silence functioned in both alchemy and the liturgy to protect the proprietary rites, we should also realize that silence itself is nothing less than a discourse with its own unique meanings and interpretive modes. As I pointed out in this book's introduction, liturgical commentators ascribed various meanings to liturgical silence. And as I will argue in the next chapter, silence allowed lay worshippers to carry out various activities, most importantly, their silent prayers that approximated the priest's at the altar. But like any other liturgical formula, such silence can be easily "aped." In the case of spoken liturgical utterances, their formulas could withhold their meaning from their speakers even as they ventriloquized them. Silence carries with it a slightly different investment. More than just safeguarding knowledge, silence is meant to authenticate the knowledge that it contains by ensuring that vulgar voices have not corrupted it. As Lochrie argues of alchemical secrecy, "[T]he elaborate secrecy of the master in the know functions to ensure the value—the capital—of his knowledge, rendering it esoteric, dangerous, and desirable because it is secret."³⁸

Indeed, like one of the devil's sundry *formes*, silence can conceal and even legitimize a dubious substance beneath it, a duplicitous capacity that suggests the potential dubiety of Eucharistic secrets themselves. A significant example of liturgical silence's use to deceive is found in

a rare excerpt from a Lollard Mass recorded by Anne Hudson. It was performed by the errant priest William Ramsbury and is included in Thomas Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* in 1389. The text tells us that Ramsbury would not recite the traditional formula but rather just move his lips ("nichil dicendo set labia mouendo ac si diceret") during the Offeratory, a part of the Mass that was performed aloud.³⁹ Ramsbury's silent performance is most intriguing during the Canon, when he would "say nothing" yet still elevate the bread and wine ("Et Prefacione publice lecta, nichil dixit set signa fecit vsque ad Leuacionem nichil dicendo, et sic leuauit panem et calicem.")⁴⁰ This heterodox performance is fascinating for the ambiguity it fosters. In the parts of the Mass that were recited aloud, Ramsbury subverts the conventional performance's significance by just moving his lips and not reciting the proper formula. In this case, "liturgical" silence both subverts the traditional performance and also works to mask his heterodox performance. During the Canon, Ramsbury's use of silence to conceal his performance's content corresponds with silence's conventional liturgical function. Given that the audience at an orthodox liturgy could not hear the formula, Ramsbury's performance would have been audially equivalent to it.

Although this record of a Lollard recitation of the Canon is unique, other medieval texts speak to the orthodox anxiety that priests could just "move their lips" rather than silently recite the liturgical formula. For example, Cæsarius of Heisterbach's compendium of miracles includes a story of a priest who during the Canon was lifted off the ground, that is, unless he "celebrated hurriedly and without real devotion or when he was distracted by the noise of the people."⁴¹ By "celebrated hurriedly," Cæsarius refers to the clerical abuse of just glossing over the Canon's words; since they were silent, no one but he would know otherwise. Thus, the priest's miraculous levitation would guarantee what numerous English statutes mandate: that he said the Canon correctly, completely, and devoutly. As I showed in this book's introduction, Robert Grosseteste reflected his investment in the Canon's proper recitation in his practical advice to priests, that they recite it "with proper ceremony" (*rite correctus*).

In *The Friar's Tale*, silence's capacity both to safeguard and also to mystify knowledge is disclosed in the devil's cagey means of disclosing his *subtiltee* to the summoner. Despite and because of the summoner's persistent questioning, the devil does not reveal his *subtiltee* per se but rather the secrets of his shape-shifting. Indeed, throughout his interrogation, we observe moments when he holds back some secrets, which is necessary, he reasons, since the summoner's "wit is al to bare/ To understonde, although I tolde hem" (3. 1480–1). In his extended discourse, the devil

thus speaks while remaining silent about something else, a body of secret knowledge that, as the devil assures the summoner, he will soon know by his “owene experience” (3. 1517). In the most immediate sense, the summoner’s desire for secret knowledge will be satisfied in the mock Eucharistic secrets that he soon overhears.

The Curses

The devil’s disclosure about his adoption of physical *formes* and its significance to ventriloquial liturgical performances provide a context for what follows: the carter’s and widow’s oaths that evoke the Eucharistic consecration. In their oaths, they ventriloquize the priest’s recitation of the silent Canon and, in turn, Christ’s words spoken at the Last Supper. Here we can see Chaucer addressing an anxiety found in the singing-shepherd episode of liturgical books: that the Canon will become known and vulgarized by lay worshippers. Shortly after the devil finishes explaining how he changes form, in particular, that he sometimes acquires dead bodies as did the Phitonissa (3. 1505), the summoner and he overhear the carter’s curse of his uncooperative horses:

“Hayt, Brok! Hayt, Scot! What spare ye for the stones?
The feend,” quod he, “yow fecche, body and bones,
As ferforthly as evere were ye foled,
So muche wo as I have with yow tholed!
The devel have al, bothe hors and cart and hey!” (3. 1543–7)

The Eucharistic parody in this curse resonates on a number of levels. The carter alludes to the horses’ birth (1545), thus bringing to mind Christ’s human incarnation in “body and bones” (1544). As the horses drag the cart, the carter follows them and suffers with them [“So much wo as I have with yow tholed!” (1546)] as if in perverse *imitatio Christi*. The carter’s curse parodies not only Christ’s Passion but also orthodox simulations of Christ’s suffering, the most significant of which occurred during the Mass’s Canon.

The carter’s irreverence for these Eucharistic prayers is most evident in his oath on the horses’ “body and bones” (1544), which reflects the popular practice of making oaths on Christ’s body. The blasphemous import of this act undoubtedly derived from its vulgar rendition of liturgical secret prayers, which commemorated Christ’s bodily suffering and created his body in the communion host. Numerous devotional texts such as *The Book of Vices and Virtues* and the *Ayenbite of Inwit* speak to the notion that cursing on Christ’s body physically ripped it to pieces as the Jews

did during his Passion. Oath-makers are thus “feller þan þe Jewes þat crucified hym, for þei breke none of his bones, but suche swerers hewen hym as smale or smaller þan men doþ a swyn in a bucherie.”⁴² A Middle English sermon comments on what Christ says when a person swears, an act that evokes his Passion: “Þei haue re[v]ysed and þridlyd my hondes and my fete, and þei haue nowmbred all my bones, for some caches my hede, some my bonys in is mowthe, like as he wold burste hem all to morcels.”⁴³ Chaucer echoes this widely held belief through the Pardoner’s remarks on oath-makers: “Oure blessed Lordes body they totere—/ Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hem noght ynough” (6. 474–5). The imaginative torture inflicted on Christ’s body through prescribed verbal formulas carries Eucharistic nuances that are also apparent in the plot of *The Pardoner’s Tale*. His invective against oath-makers precedes the Pardoner’s parodic rendition of the Last Supper as a celebration of Christ’s victory over “Death,” a turn of events that speaks to the imagined significance of cursing on Christ’s body. This connection between Eucharistic prayers and cursing is also implicit in a Corpus Christi sermon by John Mirk, who intimates that oath-making mocks the sacramental fraction of the Eucharist when he claims that due reverence for the Eucharist will expiate this sin.⁴⁴

In evoking the Eucharistic commemoration of Christ’s Passion, the carter’s curse exposes as available sacred discourse that should be guarded in liturgical silence. Indeed, the summoner’s excited response to the carter’s oath suggests that he has just heard a provocative and privileged piece of knowledge:

This somonour seyde, “Heere shal we have a pley.”
 And neer the feend he drough, as noght ne were,
 Ful prively, and rowned in his ere.
 “Herkne, my brother, herkne by thy feith!
 Herestow nat how that the cartere seith?
 Hent it anon, for he hath yeve it thee,
 Bothe hey and cart, and eek his caples thre.” (3. 1548–54)

The summoner no doubt hopes the devil will be as receptive to exploiting this knowledge as he himself was the whores’. Just as the whores have whispered in the summoner’s ear to divulge their sexual secrets “prively” (1343), so the summoner whispers in the devil’s ear “prively” (1550), likewise safeguarding his disclosure. Indeed, the summoner’s whispering indicates that he receives the carter’s oath as a secret; his three references to hearing in a mere two lines (1551–2) convey his surprise that he was in fact able to hear the carter’s curse, as if such a secret should have been

cloaked in silence. Note also that the summoner not only hears the secrets but also repeats them. This Eucharistic parody suggests a lay worshiper's hearing of Eucharistic secrets and the transgressive ventriloquism of the priest's inaudible performance of them. Voiced by the carter, plainly heard and repeated by the summoner, the oath and its reception signify lay penetration of the Canon's silent secrets, which have now been exposed and vulgarized.

Seeing how the devil has described himself in terms of his cavalier appropriation of *formes*—an activity that has implications for sacred language—we might expect that he would be all-too-eager to seize upon the carter's words. The significance of sacred language, however, finds an unlikely ally in the devil, who responds to the summoner's suggestion that he take the carter's team thus: "'Nay,' quod the devel, 'God woot, never a deel! It is nat his entente, trust me weel'" (3. 1555–6). As Daniel T. Kline points out, "In both legal and ecclesiastical notions of the time, God was thought ultimately to judge the truth of an oath."⁴⁵ Indeed, the devil here seems to accede to divine will. His negative response to the summoner's suggestion that he seize the carter's team may seem a shocking display of nobility on the devil's part. His refusal, on the one hand, represents an attempt to safeguard the meaning of words. Language, to the devil, needs to be endorsed by the speaker's "entente" (1556). On the other hand, the devil's noncompliance suggests that language's significance has already been etiolated. The carter's curse is, quite literally, devoid of meaning to the devil. Just as pastoral writers observed how sins of the tongue rendered language so untrustworthy that speakers had to resort to swearing to make their points, so too does the devil's appropriation of *formes* to disguise himself insinuate a semiotic crisis predicated on a disjunction between the signifier and the signified, a phenomenon manifest in words that do not reflect but rather obscure their substance.⁴⁶ As Mary Carruthers remarks of the tales of the Friar and Summoner, "[N]early all the issues in the tales they tell come down to the basic problem of the relation between external expression and inner intention, or, in the specifically verbal realm, the parallel relationship of word to meaning."⁴⁷ She adds that it is the summoner's blind allegiance to the letter rather than the spirit of words that accounts for his taking the carter's oath literally and for his not being able to read the devil's intentions to take him to hell.⁴⁸ Of the scene with the carter, Britton J. Harwood argues, "If every locution moves towards the same end, has the same perlocutionary object, then all sentences in some sense mean the same thing—which is to say that they mean nothing."⁴⁹ V. A. Kolve characterizes the carter as an Augustian "man in the middle," a secular person with no understanding of the eschatological consequences of his actions. On the carter's use of language, Kolve writes, "By denying

language its references, Chaucer (through the carter) creates a world all 'middle,' a world self-engrossed, distracted, careless of beginnings and endings, ontologies and teleologies."⁵⁰

We can apprehend the ambiguous nature of the carter's curse and hence its implications for language in its practical effect. When the carter's horses succeed in pulling the wagon out of the mud, the carter invokes Saint Loy ["I pray God save thee, and Seinte Loy!" (3. 1564)], the saint famous for his refusal to swear because he feared the consequences. Thus, any oath to Saint Loy both reflects and also dismisses the power of oaths. Chaucer's allusion to Loy illuminates nicely the vagueness of the carter's first oath. Recall that the devil has not acted on the oath because he does not believe the words were supported by intention. This discrepancy between the carter's words and his intention is evident in his almost immediate change of humor and impulse to bless his horses when they succeed in pulling the wagon. Yet, we must remember that his curse has still "worked." The horses do indeed respond immediately to the carter's oath even though they do not know what exactly its words mean, as if the words themselves had magical power. This familiar notion of the inherent power of words underlies the advice in *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, which directs the worshipper to listen carefully to the gospel even though he or she may not understand it. Its words will affect him or her as a charm does a snake:

Heo vnderstond no þing þi speche,
Whon þou hire enchauntes,
Neuerþeles heo wot ful wel
What is þi menyng eueri-del
Whon þat þou hire endauntes.⁵¹

In a related yet slightly different vein, this text also endorses the magical power of all words in its injunction against jangling. It tells the worshipper that "euerich a word þat we speke," even casual chitchat, might cause the priest to "be let of his mes."⁵² So although the devil contends that words are meaningless unless the speaker's intent valorizes them, the horses' response to the curse suggests that language indeed has a magical power guaranteeing its efficacy despite its underlying substance.

The devil and the summoner move quickly from this cursing scene to the next, that is, the old woman's curse of the summoner himself, a performance that yields dramatically different consequences. In these curses, which come in quick succession, Chaucer perhaps reflects contemporary concerns that cursing was taking over language despite pastoral initiatives to curb it. Mary F. Godfrey notes that "[c]ommentators worried that England was becoming a nation of swearers, infantile babblers almost

unable to speak without uttering an oath, and of parvenus, for whom swearing was a way to appear fashionable, even aristocratic.”⁵³ As he did when hearing the carter’s curse, the summoner whispers his untoward intentions to the devil [“This somonour to his brother gan to rowne” (3. 1572)]. Even though he knows of no vice she has committed, he decides that he will try to bilk this old woman, who happens to be especially stingy. The summoner addresses her with an ultimatum:

“Pay me,” quod he “or by the sweete Seinte Anne,
As I wol bere away thy newe panne
For dette which thou owest me of old
Whan that thou madest thyn housbonde cokewold.” (3. 1613–6)

The old woman responds by accusing the summoner of using unethical speech, which suggests that her own response will have implications for language:

“Thou lixt!” quod she, “by my savacioun,
Ne was I nevere er now, wydwe ne wyf,
Somedon unto youre court in al my lyf;
Ne never I nas but of my body trewe!
Unto the devel blak and rough of hewe
Yeve I thy body and my panne also.” (3. 1618–3)

Critical opinion of the old woman’s curse has been divided. While Kolve reads the carter as an Augustinian “man in the middle,” he deems the woman as “too old, too poor, too vulnerable” to represent the average medieval subject.⁵⁴ Robert Myles also devalues the power of the old woman’s speech, alleging that she herself commits a sin in cursing the summoner to hell.⁵⁵ While David Wallace invests the widow’s curse with “the power of the countryside” (home to 95 percent of the population and the locus of the medieval economy), he also argues that “[w]hen the devil and the summoner go to hell, the narrative discards her; this is not her story.”⁵⁶ Larry Scanlon ascribes to the old woman a fleeting power. Yet, he claims that the summoner is actually damned by his own words: “Nay thane . . . the foule feend me fecche/ If I th’excuse, though thou shul be spilt!” (3. 1610–11). Of the old woman’s speech, Godfrey argues, “[A]t the moment of her greatest presence as a speaker, she is paradoxically most absent, parroting the language of patriarchal authority in the strictures of Church anathem, her words interpreted by listening men.”⁵⁷

Alcuin Blamires is alone in arguing for the valence of the old woman’s quasi-excommunication, arguing that “[t]here had always been a niche

in Catholic doctrine for the hypothesis that women might assume exceptional religious powers when society lacked effective moral or spiritual male leaders.”⁵⁸ Citing Wycliffite polemic that the laity was often morally and spiritually superior to the priesthood, he adds, “[S]he can become a voice for God’s curse in order to exercise divinely sanctioned lay jurisdiction against what reformers saw as the worst aspects of ecclesiastical authority.”⁵⁹ I agree with Blamires that the old woman’s curse is invested with “quasi-excommunicative” power. But it signifies more than that. Like the carter’s curse, it also evokes the Eucharistic transubstantiation and thus speaks to the clerical anxiety that these prayers would become known by the lay people. The summoner’s demand of the widow’s “newe panne” (3. 1614) to pay her alleged old “dette” (3. 1615) suggests Christ’s sacrificial death, which signified a new covenant that replaced the old. More significant is the woman’s own gift of “thy body and my panne” (1623), which evokes Christ’s body and the Eucharistic “*pain*,” a pun that the French-literate Chaucer intended. The new “*pain*”’s curious bundling with the summoner’s body brings to mind contemporary discourse surrounding the Eucharistic transubstantiation, namely, questions about the degree to which the bread and Christ’s body were present in the transubstantiated “*pain*.” Although the key historical moments of this debate over the Real Presence predate Chaucer, he would have been familiar with Wyclif’s famous denial in 1381 of the orthodox belief that the bread became Christ’s body. Wyclif attacked transubstantiation doctrine insofar as the Eucharist was understood to be accident without substance, having the form of bread but being something else in substance. After the consecration, the substance of the bread was supposedly annihilated and supplanted by that of Christ’s body. Instead, Wyclif advocated the simultaneous presence of the substance of Christ’s body and of the consecrated bread, doctrine known as “impanation.” Thus, apropos of Wyclif’s thinking, the summoner’s body and the widow’s *panne* are grouped together in one offering. Apropos of orthodox thinking on the Eucharist, however, the *panne* all but disappears as it hardly seems so valuable an offering as the summoner’s body.

The old woman’s pseudo-Eucharistic curse has a different effect on the devil than the carter’s did. When hearing the carter’s curse, the summoner wished to divorce words from their underlying intention by seizing on their forms. The devil, however, reads words in terms of their *entente*, an interpretive strategy that corrects for the summoner’s willfully blinkered misinterpretation of words. Indeed, the devil takes her curse seriously and confirms her intentions:

“Now Mabely, my owene mooder deere
Is this youre wyl in ernest that ye seye?”

“The devel,” quod she, “so fecche hym er he deye
And panne and al, but he wol hym repente!” (3. 1623–6)

The devil is sure to verify that it is the old woman's desire to have the summoner go to hell, that her words are supported by her "wyl" (3. 1624). In light of the oath's context in sacred language and thus its importance to sacred discourse, it is significant that her wish comes true. Not only is the summoner quickly taken to hell, but language's underlying meaning—which has been at stake throughout the tale—is recognized and reified in the old woman's curse.

The Old Woman's Ventriloquism

The rest of the tale attends to the mixed consequences of the old woman's successful ventriloquism of this sacred, secret, and clerical speech, a performance that discloses the power of unauthorized speech as supported by intention (in light of her curse's practical effect) as well as its potential meaninglessness (in light of the ease with which she can appropriate this language to utter her curse). Laying out the condition under which the summoner should be spared—"but he wol hym repente" (3. 1626)—the old woman again ventriloquizes clerical speech, namely, that of a confessor. Her ventriloquial performance is especially transgressive in this tale, which is prefaced by the Friar's admonishment of the Wife of Bath for appropriating clerical speech and begins with the summoner's distortion of confessional discourse. The ventriloquial nature of the old woman's speech becomes more apparent when the Friar concludes his tale by urging his fellow pilgrims to pray for summoners, lest they all be taken to hell: "And prayeth that thise somonours hem repente/ Of hir misdeeds, er that the feend hem hente" (3. 1664–5). Spoken by the Friar, the tale's concluding lines merely rephrase the old woman's last two lines, the memorable words that sent the summoner to hell.

On the one hand, this echo reflects the fact that the Friar is the storyteller—a ventriloquist, a puppet master—whose voice is heard in the old woman's speech. In that, it evokes Chaucer's insertion into the tale-telling game of the Chaucer "popet" (7. 701) who will utter his own authoritative words in telling two tales, albeit poorly received ones. On the other hand, the Friar's repetition indicates he himself is a puppet that regurgitates pastoral teaching or, worse yet, simply echoes the old woman. Helpful in understanding *The Friar's Tale's* ventriloquized moral is the conclusion of *The Manciple's Tale*, in which the Manciple reiterates for his audience his mother's lesson on idle speech:

But, as I seyde, I am noght textueel.
 But natheless, thus taughte me my dame:
 "My sone, think on the crowe, a Goddes name!
 My sone, keep wel thy tonge, and keep thy freend
 A wikked tonge is worse than a feend." (9. 316–20)

Given that pastoral literature informs the mother's words, the Manciple's speech also ventriloquizes clerical, "textueel" discourse, what "wise clerkes seyn" (9. 314).⁶⁰ What the Manciple's mother has warned him of is the perversity of a "wikked tonge" (9. 320), exemplified in the crow's unwise speech that effects the loss of his voice. As Craun points out, she advocates not silence in all instances, as recent critics have maintained, but "prudent restraint in speech which the pastoral treatises offer as a major remedy against a loose tongue."⁶¹ In repeating his mother's warning, however, the Manciple in fact does what it seems Phebus's crow routinely does; he ventriloquizes speech that is more sophisticated than its speaker. Thus, the Manciple's moral is itself ventriloquial speech that is removed from its original source and therefore is suspect.

To illuminate the significance of the old woman's ventriloquial performances, we should recall the crow's fateful utterance that reveals to Phebus his cuckoldry: "Cokkow! Cokkow! Cokkow!" (9. 243). This is not human speech but rather a meaningless bird noise that, unfortunately, has all-too-much significance for Phebus. We would be right to suspect that the bird's heretofore ventriloquized human speech is more acceptable to Phebus (not to mention less disturbing) than this instance of bird speech that comes naturally to him. As is the case with the crow's ventriloquized human speech that does not naturally pertain to him, the old woman's ventriloquism of pastoral speech goes unchallenged; it seems "natural" for its perceived authority and authenticity. It even functions as a model for the Friar's ensuing speech, which thus seems to ventriloquize hers, a scenario that anticipates post-modern discourse on mastery, copies, and simulacra.⁶²

Like the old woman's curse, the devil's final speech to the summoner usurps authority by ventriloquizing a veritable source, a performance that calls into question the authority of the original. Despite the old woman's command, the summoner refuses to repent for his sins and is then taken to hell. In meting out this punishment, the devil adopts a clerical role. To fortify his credibility and assert his clerical prerogative, the devil quotes scripture:

"Now brother," quod the devel, "be nat wrooth;
 Thy body and this panne been myne by right.
 Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonyght,
 Where thou shalt knowen of oure privette
 Moore than a maister of dyvynytee."
 And with that word this foule feend hym hente;
 Body and soule he with the devel went
 Where as somonours han hire heritage. (3. 1634–41)

In his *Prologue*, the Friar silenced the Wife of Bath to preserve clerical control over scripture. Arguably more vulgar than the Wife is the devil, whose appropriation of scripture is evident in his mimicry of Christ's words on the cross to the Good Thief ("Today you shall be with me in Paradise"⁶³) when he tells the summoner "Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight" (3. 1636). The devil's mimicry of Christ's words recorded in Luke's gospel calls to mind the contemporary controversy about vernacular translations of scripture. Indeed, it could have well supported Archbishop Arundel's 1408 constitution that prohibited English translations of scripture: *Ne quis texta S. scripturae transferat in linguam Anglicanam*.⁶⁴ Although Arundel cited the potential for mistranslation as reason for this injunction, the nature of his other constitutions—such as those outlawing preaching without a license, teaching children about the sacraments, or questioning church articles—suggests his concern about the loss of clerical prerogative that would ensue if the laity taught or wrote theology.⁶⁵ Fiona Somerset speaks to the efflorescence of English translations from the Latin between the mid 1370's and 1410. She argues that the "'translation' of scholastic material found nowhere else in English into the domain of lay judgment carries along with it the threat of clerical disendowment."⁶⁶ This translation effort took place during what Blamires calls "increasing official alarm about Wycliffite ideas,"⁶⁷ a fact that contributed to orthodox anxiety over lay access to texts that were part of clerical domain. Chaucer nicely addresses this anxiety in having the devil's words evoke a ventriloquial episode from scripture, namely, the devil's speech in 1 Samuel that anticipates Christ's words in Luke.

The full import of the devil's ventriloquism of Christ's words is evident in a listening game that Chaucer plays with his audience, who should recognize that the devil now invokes the promise that he had made earlier to the summoner:

"But o thyng warne I thee, I wol nat jape:
 Thou wolt algates wite how we been shape;
 Thou shalt hereafterward, my brother deere,
 Come there thee nedeth nat of me to leere,
 For thou shalt, by thyn owene experience,
 Konne in a chayer rede of this sentence
 Bet than Virgile, while he was on lyve,
 Or Dant also." (3. 1513–20)

This remark concludes the devil's discourse on his physical forms that I discussed in the first part of this chapter. Immediately following the devil's warning to the summoner is his account of the Witch of Endor summoning the devil to speak "renably and faire and wel" (3. 1509)

in Samuel's form to Saul. And the words that the devil spoke through the Phitonissa are now echoed in his final promise to the summoner: "Thou shalt with me to helle yet tonight" (1636).⁶⁸ The devil's promise to Saul, which he alluded to earlier and repeats at the tale's end, approximates Christ's to the Good Thief, a troubling coincidence.⁶⁹ In having the devil repeat this promise, Chaucer means for his audience to notice another layer of ventriloquism in this performance, namely, the devil's of Christ's words. The devil ventriloquizes Christ's words before Christ himself spoke them and thus, somewhat oddly, succeeds in appropriating an orthodox formula that does not yet exist. Even more worrisome is the possibility that since the devil's speech precedes Christ's, perhaps it is Christ who ventriloquizes the devil's original promise, a circumstance that would render Christ's words a mere copy of a questionable original.

Throughout *The Friar's Tale*, I have tracked episodes that give witness to how language's meaning is both diminished and also safeguarded by speakers through their ventriloquial performances. Its closing lines perhaps offer a comprehensive take on language's significance. *The Friar's Tale* seems to culminate in language's patent failure when the Friar alleges that he cannot describe the horrors of hell with which the summoner is now becoming acquainted: "Al be it so no tongue may it devyse/ Thogh I myghte a thousand wynter telle/ The peynes of thilke cursed hous of helle" (3. 1650–2). Hell surpasses even his powers of speech, which, if this Friar is anything like his fictional analog in *The Summoner's Tale*, are quite formidable indeed. His silence designates language's failure or, perhaps more optimistically, a desire to safeguard knowledge of hell, an impulse that thus draws a troubling connection between demonic secrets and sacred ones sanctified by silence.

This chapter's inquiry into the relationship between (un)authorized speakers and their ventriloquial performances is one that I pursue in the next chapter, which treats a lay person's ventriloquism of clerical speech through a nonoral organ. *The Friar's Tale* examines the lay appropriation of clerical speech: confessional discourse, Eucharistic formula, and preaching. To understand the relationship between the anxiety about lay speech in *The Friar's Tale* and the lay subversion of clerical speech *The Summoner's Tale*, we should apprehend the relationship of the tales themselves. In the progression between these two tales, the latter "quytting" the former, we can observe Chaucer's anti-clericism become more poignant. In *The Friar's Tale*, the carter and the old woman approximate the silent Eucharistic prayers. In *The Summoner's Tale*, Thomas's fart "hyd in pryvetee" (3. 2143) successfully appropriates the priest's "privy prayers" said during the silent Canon and calls into question their meaning. Furthermore, the tale ultimately valorizes the laity's own silent prayers

said during the silent Canon over the priest's, lay-driven performances that need not rely on clerical models for their ability to speak to God. Thus, we can perceive Chaucer moving from addressing contemporary anxieties over the integrity of clerical speech to offering an example of lay subversion of it.

PART III

LAY SUBVERSION IN THE EUCHARISTIC CANON

CHAPTER 5

BELLY SPEECH

Like *The Friar's Tale*, *The Summoner's Tale* explores the relationship between profane speakers and sacred speech and thus investigates the power of the clerical voice.¹ Despite the fact that Chaucer was living in a religious culture characterized by pastoral care efforts to improve the efficacy of preaching and confession, he also witnessed a foreclosure of lay involvement in the liturgy. As we learn from Wyclif, the Mass's rituals were becoming more complicated; lay people's voiced roles during the liturgy were taken over by clerks; and lay devotional missals stressed the importance of lay people remaining silent during the service. More so than *The Friar's Tale*, *The Summoner's Tale* investigates the exclusion of the laity from the Mass. The tale itself has a loosely liturgical framework: Friar John's lengthy sermon is followed by Thomas's pseudo-Eucharistic offering. In *The Summoner's Tale*, it is as if the lay people, so improved by the pastoral care efforts that, wittingly or not, galvanized the power of the clerical voice, are themselves so empowered that they not only subvert clerical authority but also prove the value of lay speech.

In *The Friar's Tale* sacred speech was ventriloquized by unauthorized speakers. In *The Summoner's Tale* perverse speech is ventriloquial in the traditional sense; it comes from parts of the body other than the mouth. That his voice has its source in his belly is the very first thing the reader learns about Friar John. Since he is a preacher of the Word endowed with the power to say Mass, his voice should derive *de ore Domini*. Gluttony, however, motivates him to deliver long-winded, misinformed homilies at Mass to earn food for feasting afterward. In yoking the oral activities of speaking and eating, Chaucer reflects an impetus found in fourteenth-century pastoral texts, which expand the rubric "glotonye" to include "wikkede tongue," both under the capital "synne of mouþ."² Consolidating gluttony and verbal sins under "synne of mouþ" calls attention to the mouth's various vicious predilections. In turn, it renders

speech prey to the belly and thus admits the potential for Friar John's "belly-speech" and other ventriloquial distortions that represent speech's relocation from its proper source in the mouth. The first part of this chapter will attend to Friar John's vitiated voice.

The second part investigates Thomas's notorious response to the friar. Speech seems to have bottomed out into a state of utter ventriloquial depravity when Thomas offers Friar John his infamous gift "hyd in pryvetee" (3. 2143). This gift, a fart, seems additionally base when read as a parodic Eucharistic offering that John is supposed to share with his 12 fellow friars. There is a double layer of ventriloquism in this performance. Thomas ventriloquizes the Eucharistic prayers, which, normatively, represent the priest's ventriloquism of Christ's words at the Last Supper. Scholarship has interpreted the fart as a gross depiction of the Pentecostal winds that gifted the 12 apostles with preaching skills that are clearly not manifest in Friar John.³ Although Pentecost surely resonates in the tale's closing scenes, the fart's relevance to Eucharistic secrets is apparent in the word "*pryvetee*" and its variants, which in Chaucer's time described the priest's and lay people's vocal performances during the silent portion of the Mass. The consecrating priest whispered the Eucharistic secrets in his "privy prayers" and thus excluded the laity from this sacred part of the liturgy. The laity, however, engaged in their own "privy prayers," which afforded them the opportunity for private conversations with God. Apropos of the liturgical silence in which these "privy prayers" were said, it is important to note that while silence grants the priest's voice the power to ventriloquize Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper and thus to consecrate the sacrament, silence also speaks to suspicions about any human voice's ability to articulate such sacred secret prayer without vulgarizing it, a tension that is played out in *The Summoner's Tale*. Depraved performance that it is, Thomas's fart "hyd in pryvetee" evokes the mystical notion that conventional language is unable to address *deus absconditus*. Depraved performance though it may be, however, Thomas's ventriloquial belly-speech is just such a mystical language that subverts oral speech, compromised as it is by the mouth's sins. *The Summoner's Tale* thus culminates in a recuperation of the lay voice, which is undoubtedly depraved yet capable of profound speech. In evoking Eucharistic silence as well as the errant speech that necessitates it, *The Summoner's Tale* not only valorizes lay devotional speech but also calls into question what I identified in this book's introduction as the three standards for religious speech, namely, speech produced by the mouth, the scriptural Word, and silence. Ultimately, lay speech subverts not only these three standards but also clerical speech by designating lay discourse a more capable medium for conveying sacred mysteries.

Friar John's Twin Sins: Gluttony and Abuse of the Word

The Friar's Tale closes with the Friar's allegation that he cannot describe the pains of hell, which is of course disingenuous since visions of hell abound in medieval literature and art. Indeed, his silence is quickly exposed as an eloquent cover-up when the Summoner does exactly what the Friar says he cannot. In his *Prologue*, the Summoner relates a vision of hell and, in doing so, discloses the Friar's real motivation for keeping silent on the subject. Given that hell is—as we learn from the Summoner—full of friars, the Friar's knowledge of hell would serve only to draw suspicion onto himself. The Friar surely squirms as the Summoner withholds no detail in relating a cautionary vision of hell had by a friar:

Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve,
 Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve
 Twenty thousand freres on a route,
 And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute,
 And comen again as faste as they may gon,
 And in his ers they crepten everychon.
 He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille. (3. 1693–9)

Undoubtedly preaching all the way, friars swarm out of the devil's ass. As if anticipating the Summoner's tale-telling, the devil then makes his own "tayl" lie "stille," a word that means "motionless" yet also "silent." Chaucer's puns on the words "stille" and "tayl" direct us to read this scene as a vulgarized verbal performance, which makes sense given that medieval images of hell often depict its portal as a mouth.⁴ When interpreting this rectal entryway *vis-à-vis* the hellmouth of medieval drama and iconography, we should keep in mind that the motif of ass/mouth confusion often characterizes images of hell and the demonic, which Martha Bayless points out.⁵ Such confusion, for example, can be seen in the frontispiece of the early fourteenth-century Queen Mary's Psalter; the devil puts his ass, which has a face of its own, over the hellmouth. Ass/mouth inversion also appears in pastoral literature to characterize various sins of the tongue.⁶ Invoking this trope, Chaucer borrows from pastoral literature the image of the scorpion to portray misleading speech in *The Merchant's Tale*, which describes Fortune as one "that flaterest with thyn heed whan thou wolt styng; / Thy tayl is deeth, thurgh thyn envenymynge" (IV. 2059–60). In *The Manciple's Tale*, Phebus similarly implies that ass/mouth confusion underlies his crow's awful speech, uttered "with tonge of scorpioun" (9. 271). By opening *The Summoner's Tale* with this image of the devil's open tail, Chaucer thus attunes his audience to his tale's investment in ventriloquism, that is, speech that comes from a part of the body other than its usual source in the mouth.⁷

In *The Summoner's Tale*, we first hear ventriloquial speech from Friar John, whose belly motivates him to preach the Word in order to enhance his own flesh. We meet Friar John when he is leaving Mass, where he has been preaching on the value of trentals, a series of thirty masses said for the dead. He endeavors to sell trentals to lay churchgoers by explaining to them how effectively the friars perform these private Masses. Unlike priests, who delight in ritualistic performances and thus can eke out “nat but o Masse in a day” (3. 1728), friars value efficiency. They will “hastily” (3. 1726) say an entire trental in a single day in order to expedite the release of souls from purgatory. The friar’s boast speaks to the popularity of private Masses, which, according to medieval critics of this practice, capitalized on popular superstitions about the Mass’s marvelous benefits.⁸ Chaucer alludes to this perceived excess of private Masses and thus implicates friars for their hyperactive recitation of sacred liturgical formula, which, in Friar John’s case at least, served as a means of obtaining donations from lay people. While evincing the friars’ exploitation of a certain type of clerical speech, their hurried performance of private Masses also suggests a contributing factor behind the silence of the Canon. The noted liturgical scholar Josef A. Jungmann describes how the unique method designed for saying numerous private Masses reinforced the Canon’s silence; the first Mass would be sung to the Canon and then continued in silence while a second Mass began at another altar.⁹ In his study of the silent Canon, Carlos A. Lewis observes that while this arrangement for the performance of private Masses was not solely responsible for the introduction of the silent Canon, it could have helped establish its routine ritual practice.¹⁰ The *Tale*’s incisive portrait of Friar John’s method of saying private Masses introduces a couple of animating tensions that underlie its representations of liturgical silence and the privy prayers said during it. On the one hand, the friar declares his mastery of clerical speech, which, in turn, offers him a venue for taking advantage of his lay charges. On the other, he unwittingly discloses his abuse of the clerical privilege to say Mass, which is apparent in his hasty—and most likely, thoughtless—recitation of the liturgy. Although the silent Canon could denote reverence for sacred mysteries, in Friar John’s recitation of trentals silence would imply a Mass streamlined for maximal profit.

After leaving Mass, Friar John heads to the home of Thomas and his wife, where he makes a series of subtle references to the silent Canon. In particular, he will invoke clerical access to these sacred secrets and lay exclusion from them in order to authorize his own verbal performance to collect on his choice clerical privilege: receiving nourishment from his lay charges. Indeed, upon his arrival at Thomas’s house, Friar John wastes no time in requesting a sumptuous feast, the Eucharistic nuances of which

are evident when considering the specific items for which the friar has begged when leaving mass: cakemeal, cake ("a Goddes kechyl" [3. 1747]), a "Goddes halfpeny" (3. 1749), and a "Masse peny" (3. 1749).¹¹ Taken together, these Eucharistic goods and the friar's planned feast indicate how his gluttony affronts the Eucharist's capacity for spiritual satiation. His post-Mass feast parodies not only the Eucharistic meal but also the notion of the Word as spiritual food, apparent in the deadpan comment that follows his huge food order: "My spirit hath his fostryng in the Bible" (1845). The friar's disingenuous invocation of the Word's nurturant power thus reflects on his gluttony as well as his degenerate speech.

That the friar's gluttony motivates his ill-informed appeals to scripture—such as his errant citation of Christ's special favor toward friars ["I ne have no text of it, as I suppose,/ But I shal fynde it in a maner glose" (3. 1919–20)]—is an issue that Mary Carruthers, Martha H. Fleming, and Jill Mann have discussed.¹² I would add that Friar John's cooperating oral sins evoke the two branches of the capital "synne of mouþ," a convention found in the fourteenth-century *Ayenbite of Inwit* and *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, works derived from the compendious thirteenth-century French text, the *Somme le Roy*. These texts all portray "synne of mouþ" as one of the seven deadly sins, a classification scheme that suggests the sin of gluttony has indeed engulfed the sins of the tongue. We can find a context for interpreting this connection between speech and gluttony in the traditional monastic practice of ruminating on sacred texts, which represents an optimized relationship between speaking and eating, the mouth and the stomach. In rumination, the reader's stomach (*L. rumen*) digests the sacred words that his mouth ingests, an activity whose completion is manifest in his subaudial reading voice. In a related yet different vein, one more relevant to Friar John and the capital sin of which he is guilty, acknowledgement of the belly's power over the mouth underlies Saint Paul's dictum that is often quoted in pastoral literature: gluttons exalt their bellies as gods.¹³ In his particular usage, "gluttons" denoted pagans who yielded to fleshly appetites. Paul's characterization of the belly as a "false god" invokes Judeo-Christian invective against ventriloquism practiced by pagan pseudo-prophetic "belly-speakers" who pretended to utter divine speech.

Though belly-prophets were not common in fourteenth century England, the rubric "synne of mouþ" intimates how the belly could enlist the mouth in ventriloquial speech celebrating gluttony rather than God. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, for instance, humorously portrays the glutton substituting orthodox services with his own matins and lauds:

And when he schal rise, he bigynneþ his beedes and seiþ, "A, lord, God, what schule we ete to-day? Where schule we fynde any þing þat ougt is?"

And after þes mateynes, þan comēþ þe laudes: "A, lord God, we drunken good wyn gister-euen and ete good mete."¹⁴

The notion that gluttony led to the distortion of sacred speech also underlies the parodic "drinkers' Masses" and "gluttons' Masses" that Bayless describes. Performed in medieval monasteries, these "Masses" spoof orthodox worship in revering a god who is not "omnipotens" but "ventripotens." Drunken renditions of sacred rites such as these are of course intended to be comical yet also evince the directive impulse to associate the belly's gluttony with deviant speech.¹⁵

Chaucer's portrait of Friar John thus draws on the association found in pastoral literature between gluttony, deviant speech, and errant religious practices. Somewhat ironically, the friar himself preaches against the sin of gluttony not to instruct Thomas and his wife, *per se*, but rather to assert fraternal privilege over them, a privilege epitomized in his own desire to control sacred speech. According to Friar John, control over their appetites explains friars' special ability to communicate with God, as he boasts in his exchange with Thomas's wife just before she departs to prepare his feast. Thomas's wife tells the friar that her little boy has recently died. Not one to be caught off guard, Friar John pretends to have had special knowledge of this event: "His deeth saugh I by revelacioun" (3. 1854). As a truthful necromantic ventriloquist might, the friar attributes his revelation to his belly, in particular, the avid fasting in which his fellow friars and he engage:

Oure orisons been moore effectueel,
And moore we seen of Cristes secree thynges,
Than burell folk, although they weren kynges.
We lyve in poverte and in abstinence,
And burell folk in richesse and despence
Of mete and drynke, and in hir foul delit. (3. 1870–75)

Friar John's lies about his fasting in fact serve an important didactic function; they make the reader aware of the link between "glotonye" and "wikkede tonge." To the friar's credit, perhaps after an especially long fast, his belly grumbles as would the pagan ventriloquists' (L. "belly speakers"), who were so-called because of their habit of swallowing air to produce oracular "voices" in their bellies. Whatever the mechanism, Friar John's belly-speech implies that friars are privy to an enigmatic body of knowledge that he calls "Cristes secree thynges" (3. 1871), a privilege they enjoy due to their alleged appetitive restraint. Since this knowledge of "Cristes secree thynges" includes his insight into the dead son's afterlife, Friar John thus evokes the secret part of the Mass, that is,

the silent Canon that commemorates Christ's death. Arguing in a similar vein as I do, James Andreas reads contemporary liturgical parodies in *The Summoner's Tale* and recognizes the dead son as a Christ figure.¹⁶ When read in terms of the tale's liturgical context, "Cristes secree thynges" represent the Mass's Canon that commemorates Christ's death. Lay folk are excluded from this knowledge of "Cristes secree thynges" because they are given to excessive eating as well as perverse entertainment ["mete and drink and foul delit" (3. 1875)], thus embodying the association between gluttony and deviant speech found in directive literature. In his characterization of lay deviant orality that precludes their knowledge of "Cristes secree thynges," the friar also calls to mind the main practical purpose behind liturgical silence: to troubleshoot against the perversion of Eucharistic secrets by vulgar mouths. Spurious though they may be, Friar John's claims about his knowledge and lay ignorance of "Cristes secree thynges" will render the lay assertion of control over Eucharistic secrecy later in the tale all the more dramatic.

Friar John's allegation about fraternal appetitive restraint provides a point of departure for his bloated sermon to Thomas, during which the friar attempts to impress upon his lay charge the fact of clerical, in particular, fraternal superiority over lay people. To this end, the friar subtly recalls the silent Canon, a liturgical custom that both epitomizes and also exhibits this clerical authority over sacred discourse. While alluding to this clerical performance in order to authorize his own homiletic speech, the friar refers to other types of clerical speech that his errant sermon plainly does not embody. So although the friar's sermon is meant to endorse his vocation, it also includes grounds for critiquing how he himself uses clerical speech and, by extension, how he views his clerical authority over lay people. This issue of clerical speech and its constituent authority underlies the friar's appeal to Aaron, Moses, and Elijah as examples of prophets who fasted in order to communicate with God. They serve as Old Testament analogues for medieval friars, whose rigorous "fastynge" (3. 1883), according to the friar, "[m]aketh that Crist accepteth oure preyeres" (3. 1884). To convince his audience how deep his commitment to fasting runs, Friar John enlists Moses and Elijah as examples of famous fasters who heard God's voice:

Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty nyght
 Fasted, er that the heighe God of myght
 Spak with hym in the mountayne of Synay.
 With empty wombe, fastynge many a day,
 Receyved he the lawe that was written
 With Goddes fynger; and Elye, wel ye witen,

In mount Oreb, er he hadde any speche
 With hye God, that is oure lyves leche,
 He fasted longe and was in contemplaunce. (3. 1885–93)

The friar goes on to add that Aaron directed priests to abstain from drink “that myghte hem dronke make” (3. 1899) before going “into the temple” (3. 1896). Given that Friar John’s claim about his own fasting is disingenuous, we should reconsider his scriptural examples and recognize what else these holy men had in common. As Friar John discloses, each holy man enjoyed his audience with God while physically separated from the people. Furthermore, each of the removed locales in which these divine revelations took place suggests the liturgy’s silent Canon, in particular, its exclusionary function. This connection becomes apparent in the friar’s characterization of Aaron, who conducted his priestly duties within the “temple” (3. 1896), a place better known as the *sanctum sanctorum*. Although the Old Testament sanctuary was meant to foster a spatial remove between the priest and the people, medieval liturgical commentaries would invoke it to explain the significance of the Canon’s silence. For instance, William Durandus’s *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, a late thirteenth-century exhaustive work on which successive liturgical commentaries were based, describes the silent Canon in terms of the Old Testament means of clerical seclusion:

The temple at that time was divided into two parts by a veil in the middle of it. The first part was called the Holy Place, the inner part the Holy of Holies. Whatever part of the office of the Mass comes before “the secret” is performed as if it were in the first place. Whatever is in “the secret” is performed as if it were within the Holy of Holies.¹⁷

Thus, in Friar John’s homily to Thomas, the minor detail about Aaron’s entry into the temple brings to mind an image that was applied to medieval priests’ insider knowledge of liturgical secrets. While Friar John putatively cites Aaron as an inspiration for the friars’ abstinence, he in fact names him to position friars at an imaginative remove from the lay people.

And in the friar’s portrait of Moses’s and Elijah’s private conversations with God, he also insinuates how fraternal privilege is offset by lay depravity, which is apparent in their physical distance from the laity. Friar John’s references to Moses’s audience with the “heighe God” (3. 1886) and Elijah’s with the “hye God” (3. 1892) evoke, in the most immediate sense, the elevated locales in which each man received his sacred revelation, Moses on Mount Sinai and Elijah on Mount Horeb. The friar’s

repetition of this particular divine designation ("high God") in such close succession should cue us to its significance when he uses it again. To sum up the merits of religious fasting, Friar John impresses upon Thomas that friars' prayers are "to the *hye God* moore acceptable/Than youres, with youre feestes at the table" (3. 1913–14; my italics). In identifying the audience for the friars' prayers as "hye God" (1913), the friar divulges his key motivation for alluding to these Old Testament prophets. As with Aaron, he does not appeal to Moses and Elijah because of their fasting practices per se but rather the physical remove in which each man fasted in order to facilitate conversation with God. Furthermore, Friar John approves of how this clerical seclusion reflects on lay unworthiness to engage in divine conversation, which is evident in his claim that friars' prayers are "moore acceptable" (1913) than gluttonous lay worshippers' are. As did "Cristes scree thynges" (1871) known to friars, this privileged fraternal exchange with the "hye God" suggests the silent Canon. In the friar's line of thinking, the laity's indulgent "feestes at the table" (1914) seem like the medieval "gluttons' Mass," which parodied the priest's consecration of the Eucharistic meal at the altar. Once again, the friar alleges the lay people's deprived oral impulses prohibit their participation in a divine exchange, as if their vulgar mouths would corrupt the sacred speech appropriate to it.

The purpose behind Friar John's commentary on these Old Testament figures is to define friars in terms of their aptitude for divine conversation, a clerical privilege that, in medieval devotion, was exemplified by their knowledge of liturgical secrets. The friar, however, overlooks a critical aspect of Moses's and Elijah's mythology, one that would expose how he himself abuses clerical speech in order to satisfy his own gluttony. Both Moses and Elijah had to contend with pagan Baal worship, which would have included the practice of ventriloquism that epitomized non-Christian depravity. Chaucer's wide-ranging classical learning implies that he knew about pagan ventriloquial speech as well as its perceived spuriousness.¹⁸ He was surely aware of Elijah's famous contest at Mount Carmel with the Baal prophets, ventriloquists who pretended to receive oracular messages and perverted legitimate divine revelation from the "hye God." In Elijah's case, his face-off against these pagan prophets was especially significant to the propriety of sacred speech.¹⁹ Indeed, the Baal ventriloquists' bogus prophecies were markedly different from Elijah's divine revelation on "mount Oreb" (3. 1891), where he heard God in a "gentle whistling of air" (*sibilus aurae tenuis*), that is, silence.²⁰ With his wordy and gluttony-driven sermon, Friar John does not emulate Elijah's silent communication with the "hye God" (1892) on Mount Horeb so much as the specious prophecies delivered by pagan belly-speakers who vied against him on Mount Carmel.

Since Friar John's skill at interpreting scripture [i.e., his "wit" (1789)] is, by his own estimation, "symple" (3. 1789), he surely does not grasp the subtext of Moses's and Elijah's fasting, which wrought divine speech instead of pagan belly noises. The friar does, however, make note of how clergy less restrained than he let their gluttonous tendencies vitiate their sacred speech:

Me thynketh they been lyk Jovinyan
 Fat as a whale, and walkynge as a swan,
 Al vinolent as botel in the spence.
 Hir preyere is of ful greet reverence,
 Whan they for soules seye the psalm of Davit:
 Lo, "buf!" they seye, "*cor meum eructavit!*" (3. 1929–34)

Friar John alludes to Jovinian, a fourth-century heretic who critiqued celibate and ascetic vocations and whom Jerome attacked in his well-titled *Adversus Jovinianum*. Given that Jerome was best known for translating the Vulgate, his nemesis Jovinian implicitly connotes an affront to the Word and the ethical speech that it should inspire. Indeed, these errant clergy to whom Friar John refers reveal their Jovinian leanings by rendering the Word in voices corrupted by gluttony. Coupling two clerical shortcomings that would have offended Jerome—hedonistic tendencies with irreverence for the Word—Friar John draws a portrait of wayward clergymen who recite a psalm while full of wine, an image that mocks Eucharistic satiety as well as Mary's pregnancy with the Word. Indeed, these clergymen's perverse inspiration is such that their hearts erupt with speech ["*cor meum eructavit!*" (3. 1934)], although it perhaps seems more like they eruct than speak. Indeed, the clergymen's "buf!" sounds like a belch caused by too much eating, a belly-generated, internally-produced utterance that probably should have been kept that way.²¹ Friar John features this burp as evidence of a gluttonous tendency that has consumed the mouth's powers to produce sacred speech. His interpretation of their performance is additionally tragic when considering this line in its original context. The psalm describes a model of reverent devotional speech: "My heart has uttered a good word. I speak my works to the king. My tongue is the pen of a writer who writes swiftly" [*eructavit cor meum verbum bonum dico ego opera mea regi lingua mea stilus scribae velocis*].²² In this psalm, the impossible condition of the heart's giving utterance is meant to describe an idealized form of speech. Like writing produced by the pen, speech produced by the heart is a private yet public revelation and, more significantly, an elevated form of discourse that the tongue can only master in a figurative sense.

Induced by gluttony, the errant clergyman's heart-speech serves to locate sacred utterances in a place in the body other than the mouth and signifies a negative example of ventriloquism. In other contexts, however, heart-speech represents a positive type of ventriloquism that subverts the mouth and the perverse speech that it can produce. The psalm's depiction of heart-speech might seem merely a metaphor for inward reflection rather than "real" speech per se. Yet, heart-speech as necessary to and cooperative with mouth-speech is a motif that arises often in late medieval devotional texts. Indeed, as C. M. Woolgar points out, prayer was thought to be addressed not with the bodily voice but with the speech of the heart.²³ For instance, *The Lay Folk's Catechism* chastises men who do not pray to God sincerely: "þey worschipe hym with here lyppis and not with here hertys."²⁴ The way that God will respond to prayer that is mouthed yet not heart-felt is described in *The Book of Vices and Virtues* via a most amusing image:

God þenkeþ þat suche men þat bidden so scornen hym as men dop a doumbe fole—when men mouen here lippes vpon hym, he weneþ þat men spoken to hym, And þerfore to such men makeþ God a def eere; but þe biddynge þat comeþ from a depe herte, þat hereþ wel God.²⁵

In a similar vein, the fourteenth-century preacher's handbook, *Fasciculus Morum*, cautions its audience about the pride that leads to the evils of noisy prayer (*mala ex oratione clamorosa*). A person who prays noisily must not know that God can indeed hear what lies hidden in a man's heart (*abscondita cordis audire*).²⁶ The belief that heart-prayer was more important than mouth-prayer underlies the direction for saying the Pater Noster found in the early-fifteenth century devotional treatise, *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*: "After the sacrynge the preste sayeth the *Pater Noster*, all a lowde that the people may here yt. & pray the same in theyr hartes."²⁷ The ringing of the sacring bell to signal the host's elevation and the priest's recitation of the Pater Noster comprised two breaks in the long silence of the Mass's Canon. Significant to the value of internal prayer is the fact that this break in the Canon's silence did not cue the laity's vocal performance of the Pater Noster but rather their inward performance of it "in theyr hartes." The impact of the Canon's silence on lay private devotion is a topic that I will address in greater detail later in this chapter. For now, I suggest that in light of the importance placed in devotional works on heart-prayer over mouth-prayer, we can see that *The Myroure of Oure Ladye* means to portray the celebrating priest's audible performance as an instrument for enabling silent lay devotion. He occupies himself with the task of orally broadcasting the prayer so that the people can dedicate themselves to their private, heartfelt recitation of it.²⁸

The significance of heart-speech—not to mention the potential for irony in the gluttonous clergymen's butchered recitation of a psalm about devotional speech—is certainly lost on the equally voracious Friar John. He probably knows the psalm only for its use in services for the dead,²⁹ poor souls who would undoubtedly benefit from trentals said on their behalf. Dismissing the heart's eruption as the belly's eruption, the friar then homes in on his real goal: getting Thomas to give him money. When John comes out and asks Thomas for a donation, Thomas flatly refuses, alleging he has given money to plenty of friars whose prayers have not helped him a whit. In his next rhetorical maneuver, the friar appeals to Thomas's apostolic namesake, perhaps expecting to pique his lay charge's interest in his tedious sermon. In doing so, however, the friar unwittingly conjures a holy person whose life exhibits a sustained investment in the integrity of sacred speech, clerical and liturgical speech in particular. Friar John alludes to Saint Thomas's apostolic mission in order to get the disdainful Thomas to donate money "for to buylden Cristes owene chirche" (3. 1977).

Although Friar John contends that one can find support for his church-building fund drive in "Thomas lyf of Inde" (3. 1980), medieval lives of Thomas disclose that the saint in fact subordinated the building of churches to evangelizing and, more broadly, the proper use of sacred speech. The *Legenda Aurea* and the *South English Legendary* both relate how pagan authorities—having tired of Thomas and his evangelizing—command him to worship an idol. Thomas, of course, does not do so but instead exposes the idol's resident devil that speaks through the mute stone.³⁰ This scene—a confrontation between the saint and pagan rulers before their idol—is a familiar hagiographic trope, one that appears elsewhere in the *Canterbury Tales*, namely, in Chaucer's version of Cecilia's life in the *Second Nun's Tale*, where the saint's eloquent preaching is thrown into relief by the pagans' ventriloquial practices, that is, their reverence for "dombe" and "deve" (8. 286) idols capable only of speech fabricated through chicanery or acoustic tubes that piped in their voices from elsewhere.³¹ As a hagiographic trope, this contest serves to define Christian speech (which derives from a sacred source) over and against pagan prophecies (which come from man-made apparatus), a distinction that I explained in [Chapter 2](#).

In addition to this well-rehearsed episode, Saint Thomas's affinity for speech that is distinctively Christian is revealed in another story recorded in several versions of his life. Ungracious guests at a wedding celebration, the saint and his disciples refuse to partake in the feasting, an oral indulgence that was topped off by yet another, namely, wicked entertainment. The homily for Thomas's feast day that is included in the *Speculum*

Sacerdotale reveals how a Hebrew girl entertained the wedding company with her “mynstralcye,” a sin of the tongue, which, as John Southworth points out, was deemed especially reprehensible in medieval England.³² Thomas’s act of absenting himself from the wedding festivities thus demonstrates his particular aversion to “synne of mouþ” and, in turn, his concern about sacred speech, which for him would include preaching to convert non-Christians.

An obscure episode in Thomas’s life reflects how his investment in the integrity of sacred speech also included correct recitation of the liturgy, especially its Canon, a performance in which Saint Thomas recognized a means of cultivating clerical authority. Johannes of Hildesheim’s *Three Kings of Cologne*, a fourteenth-century English translation of the Latin legendary account of the Magi’s travels in the East, portrays Thomas ordaining the Magi along with other new priests. To mark their clerical vocation, Thomas teaches them “the manere and þe fourme to sey a Masse.”³³ In particular, the apostle divulges Christ’s words spoken at his proto-liturgical Last Supper, prayers that comprised the part of Mass that the celebrating clergyman would recite in silence: “þe wordys þat crist seyde to his disciplys whan he made his soper þat nyȝt þat he was betrayed, þorwe wiche wordys he made & ordeyned þe sacrament of þe autere.”³⁴

Although other lives of Thomas do not show him revealing the Eucharistic secrets to new priests, his connection with the silent Canon is implicit in his popular identity as “doubting Thomas,” a nickname that Friar John wisely suppresses when addressing his incredulous lay charge. Close examination of an important medieval devotional practice reveals the terms of the association of “doubting Thomas” to the Eucharistic Canon. Because the Eucharistic transubstantiation was concealed from lay worshippers in silence, the host’s elevation was introduced into the liturgy in the thirteenth century to signal to them when this miraculous change had occurred. The lay zeal for gazing upon Christ’s body in the elevated host is suggestive of Thomas’s need to see Christ’s body in order to believe in his resurrection. Thus, the popularity of lay sacramental gazing helps account for the late medieval devotion to Thomas, whose “groping” of Christ’s side was a scene frequently depicted in iconography.³⁵ In *The Summoner’s Tale* we find this famous exchange reformulated in Thomas’s invitation to the friar to “grope . . . / Bynethe my buttok” (3. 2141–42) to retrieve the special gift interred therein, a pseudo-devotional act that I will discuss later in this chapter.³⁶

If medieval worshippers’ ardent gazing on Christ’s body in the transubstantiated host intimates their companionship with “doubting Thomas,” it also reflects on the church’s impulse to exclude them from the silent

Eucharistic prayers that they, it was presumed, would only vulgarize if they knew them. In Friar John's allusion to Saint Thomas, he thus invokes a figure significant to the silent Canon and, in particular, to the power dynamic between the clergy and the laity that underlies it. Had the friar known about this aspect of Thomas's training of new priests that is chronicled in *The Three Kings of Cologne*, he no doubt would have capitalized on Thomas's endorsement of clerical privilege to sacred Eucharistic prayers and, by extension, lay exclusion from them. The terms in which this clerical privilege is defined, however, through proper production of clerical speech, would expose the friar's own errant speech that is manifest in his misdirected evangelism.

Sensing that he has not inspired his lay charge's generosity but rather incurred his anger, Friar John launches into a series of exempla on the sin of ire, a verbal foray that continues to illustrate how he abuses clerical speech for his own gain. As was the case with the stone idols that Saint Thomas exorcised, an irate demon must inhabit Thomas's body and be responsible for his angry words. Thus, Friar John cautions him, "Be war from Ire that in thy bosom slepeth;/ War fro the serpent that so slily crepeth/ Under the gras and styngeth subtilly" (3. 1993–5). His strategy for bilking Thomas of his money is to try and convince him that his irate speech means he is guilty of ire, the subject on which the friar will now preach. This particular sermon is one of several instances in *The Canterbury Tales* in which Chaucer yokes corrupt speech with anger, a connection that, as Edwin D. Craun, Fleming, and Mann have pointed out, is often found in medieval catechetical literature.³⁷

In Friar John's sermon on ire, however, Chaucer insinuates how the friar himself corrupts sacred speech for personal benefit. The friar tells Thomas the story of King Cambyzes, who, while in a fit of drunken rage, killed the son of one of his lords who had dared to criticize him. Although this exemplum is meant to deter Thomas from indulging his own anger against Friar John, the conclusion the friar comes to is that one should watch one's speech—but only when talking to powerful men:

"Syngeth *Placebo* and 'I shal, if I kan,'
But if it be unto a povre man.
To a povre man men sholde his vices telle,
But nat to a lord, thogh he sholde go to helle." (3. 2075–78)

As the friar uses the term, "singing *placebo*" has a catechetical meaning, which includes placating speech as a type of "wikkede tonge."³⁸ The exemplum's moral clearly speaks to the friar's own execution of his pastoral duties, during which he will curb his impulse to correct a rich man lest he risk upsetting a prospective benefactor.³⁹ The friar's corruption of

proper clerical speech is further evident if we consider another definition of “singing *placebo*” implicit in his exemplum. “Singing *placebo*” meant performing the office of the dead, so-called because the ceremony began with the word “*placebo*.” In the context of the exemplum that the friar tells, the clergyman who literally did “sing *placebo*” would properly commemorate the son’s death and thus exercise an appropriate use of clerical speech. While the friar undoubtedly knows that “singing *placebo*” signifies this clerical practice, he instead chooses to promote its less illustrious nuance.

In addition to these two contrasting types of speech, the friar’s reference to “singing *placebo*” also evokes the silence observed during the Eucharistic portion of the liturgy. In light of the tale’s mock liturgical elements, the friar’s account of the lord’s son’s sacrificial death suggests Christ’s death and its commemoration in the silent part of the liturgy. As if to flout the sacred liturgical ceremony, Friar John gives a quick-and-dirty summary of the son’s tragic death at Cambyzes’ hands: “His sone was slayn; ther is namoore to seye” (3. 2073). In the most immediate sense, this brief blurb seems an especially crass treatment of the son’s death. If taken allegorically, however, the friar’s suppression of this information about the son’s death speaks to his own misinterpretation of how Eucharistic silence was meant to commemorate Christ’s sacrificial death. As the friar uses it in his exemplum, silence does not memorialize the slain son nor, by extension, Christ’s sacrifice.

Rather, silence has a merely rhetorical effect; the friar expeditiously wraps up his exemplum on Cambyzes’ irate actions in order to pronounce its moral on the virtue of singing *placebo*, which, in Friar John’s usage, represents an improper use of silence. The clergyman who would ignore a rich man’s faults, as Friar John recommends, would not exercise corrective speech appropriate to a clergyman but instead would say whatever his potential meal ticket wanted to hear while remaining silent about his sins. Thus, the act of singing *placebo* serves to distort silence’s function in confession. The seal of confession bound the confessor to remain silent about a person’s sins after these had been disclosed to him, not before. In this sense, confessional silence serves a purpose different than, yet related to, Eucharistic silence’s; it deters wicked speech. For the friar, however, silence in a confessional context does not prevent but rather enables his corrupt speech, thus implicating him in the same vice that kept lay worshippers from hearing Eucharistic secrets.

The Fart

The friar soon winds down his sermon and finally gives Thomas, who has remained silent throughout this performance, a chance to offer his

notorious reply. The fart that Thomas dispenses into Friar John's hand has been read as a critique of the friar's own overblown sermon and, more broadly, a redress for his abuse of his clerical privilege to preach. A remark that Thomas makes shortly before the fart, however, indicates its particular relevance to another type of clerical speech, namely, Eucharistic secrets. Hoping that he has convinced Thomas that he is, at the very least, guilty of ire, Friar John asks Thomas to make his confession. In response, Thomas says that he has already done so, and thus he "[n]edeth namoore to speken of it" (3. 2097). Thomas not only echoes the friar's abrupt chronicle of the son's death ["ther is namoore to seye" (3. 2073)] but also uses silence as a strategy for withholding sacramental speech from the talkative clergyman. In addition to exposing the clergyman's abuse of confessional silence, Thomas's mimicry of Friar John's use of silence both appropriates and also subverts the practical function of liturgical silence: to prevent lay worshippers from hearing the Eucharistic formula recited at the altar.

Thomas's deferral introduces his infamous response to Friar John's sermon, an episode that, while fabulously comical, also implies Chaucer's desire to examine liturgical silence and the notions of sacred speech that it entails. The connection between Thomas's fart and the silent Canon becomes evident in light of the tale's allegorical similarities to the Mass. Friar John's lengthy sermon represents what was known in the early church as the Mass of the Catechumens, the liturgy's first part that included scriptural readings and the homily, a convention that exists to this day. The Eucharistic consecration and communion comprised the Mass of the Faithful, the liturgy's second part that is evoked in the rest of *The Summoner's Tale*. Thomas's contention that he has already been shriven implies that he is prepared to receive the Eucharist, which he, instead, will bestow upon the gluttonous clergyman. His offering, the fart "hyd in pryvetee" (3. 2143) that Friar John is to share with the 12 friars in his convent, broadly parodies the orthodox celebration of the Eucharist. Indeed, Alan Levitan and Penn R. Szittyá have read the fart as a mock Eucharistic gift, noting this episode's parallels with the Last Supper, during which Christ offered his sacramental body to his 12 apostles.⁴⁰ Valerie Allen, Roy Peter Clark, John V. Fleming, Levitan, Bernard S. Levy, Glending Olson, and Szittyá have interpreted it as a simulation of the Pentecostal winds that descended on the apostles and gifted them with the power to preach.⁴¹ Taken together, these interpretations suggest the significance of Thomas's fart to the Eucharistic and divine speech of the Canon. Until this point in the tale, the silent celebration of the Canon has served to exemplify one of Friar John's abiding claims: that sacred discourse and divine conversation should be reserved for the clergy

and withheld from the laity. Thomas's fart checks the friar's assumption and reveals how the issue of propriety over sacred speech is, in fact, more open-ended. Simply put, the fart represents the various significances that were ascribed to the silent Canon. Peter Travis explains how the fart represents different types of noise, noise that does not merely interrupt meaningful communication but rather generates manifold meanings in its own right.⁴² In a similar vein, I argue that the fart represents such a hermeneutic moment, as it draws into focus multivalent ideas about language that underlie Eucharistic silence and thus raises more general questions about how human beings can produce sacred speech or engage in divine conversation.

In particular, Thomas's use of the word "*pryvetee*" to describe the fart illuminates its relevance to the silent Canon and implies the various types of *privy* speech that it connotes. The word "*privy*" and its variants characterize the silent portion of the Mass in an important homily that circulated as a devotional text known as the *Lay Folk's Mass Book*. In this text, "priuey prayers" are the priest's silent prayers with which he consecrates the Eucharist. When the Canon begins, "þen þo prest gos to his boke / his priuey prayers for to loke."⁴³ Several texts contemporary with Chaucer use the word "*pryvetee*" and its variants to describe the Mass's silent part, including *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, the *Memoriale Credencium*, and the *Speculum Sacerdotale's* homily for John the Apostle's feast day.⁴⁴

We cannot, however, read Thomas's *privy* gift as an allusion to silent liturgical prayers without recalling Chaucer's fascination with sexual and scatological *pryvetee*, which has been noted by Joseph L. Baird, Robert Boening, and Robert Hanning.⁴⁵ The example most pertinent to Thomas's fart occurs in the Pardoner's invective against gluttony, in which he warns that a person who eats rich foods turns his throat into a "*pryvee*" (VI. 527). Surprisingly—or not—this abject *pryvee*-throat evokes the *privy* part of the Mass in the subsequent passage, in which the Pardoner portrays the glutton's gourmet feast as a mock Eucharistic meal. As if taking a page from a parodic "gluttons' Mass," the Pardoner ascribes a pseudo-clerical power to the gluttons' cooks who "turnen substance into accident" (VI. 539) while whipping up the sumptuous feasts. This perverse consecration conveys how the glutton's feast affronts the Eucharist's allegorical meaning as a holy meal.

Furthermore, the cook's corrupt simulation of the transubstantiation symbolically demonstrates the reason for the glutton's exclusion from true knowledge of liturgical secrets. Just as the glutton flouts the orthodox celebration of the Eucharist when he pays reverence to his own *pryvee*-throat, so does Thomas's *privy* gift undermine the sanctity

of liturgical secrets. A by-product of Thomas's own appetite, the fart lends support to Friar John's theory that lay people are indeed gluttonous and rightly excluded from knowledge of "Cristes secree thynges" (3. 1871), among them, the secret rites through which the host becomes Christ's body. In light of gluttony's close tie to verbal sins, we can see how Thomas's overfed utterance evinces both his general tendency to produce corrupt speech and also—given the mock liturgical context surrounding his *privy* performance—his particular corruption of Eucharistic secrets. Right before he farts, Thomas states his intention to remain silent rather than confess his sins to Friar John. His fart delivered "in pryvetee" (3. 2143) fills this silence, thus denoting both a perverse rendition of the priest's *privy* prayers and, by extension, Thomas's proclivity for vulgar speech that precludes his knowledge of them.

If we take Thomas's fart "hyd in pryvetee" to symbolize these liturgical *privy* prayers, we can only conclude that Chaucer intends to remark on the most sacred part of the Mass, the ventriloquism of Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper, through what is arguably the basest performance in all of the *Canterbury Tales*. Although the fart mocks sacred silence by breaking it so unceremoniously, in doing so it also reflects on silence's practical purpose: to protect sacred secrets from corruption by crude speakers, especially the lay people. More broadly, however, the Canon's silence exhibits the failure of any human speech to address the divine, a view that underpins theories of mystical language, with which Chaucer would have been familiar due to Thomas Becket's special interest in the late fourth- or fifth-century Syrian writer known as Pseudo-Dionysius.⁴⁶ Perhaps Chaucer intended the irreverent Thomas to represent the "hooly blisful martir" (I. 17) himself, in which case we can justify reading the fart in terms of the notion of divine ineffability that pervades Pseudo-Dionysian thought. In particular, Chaucer's depiction of the fart as "hyd in pryvetee" calls to mind the writings of the *Cloud*-author, the late fourteenth-century English translator of Pseudo-Dionysius's mystical works, who uses the words "*hyd*" and "*privy*" to portray a deity who is unknowable and unnamable.⁴⁷

This concept of divine ineffability—and the human depravity that it connotes—underpins liturgical commentaries on the silent Canon. William Durandus, for instance, identifies the human incapacity to understand divine secrets as a reason for the Canon's silence: "It is called 'the secret' because these things are hidden from us, since human reason can by no means fully grasp so great a mystery. To signify this, it is rightly performed in a 'secret' voice."⁴⁸ The fourteenth-century lay devotional

text *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass* offers a similar estimation of human faculties:

Wiþ al þe priuete of þe Mes
 Serteyn wiþ-oute delay
 þat couþe a mon neuere so muche of art
 He mihte not telle þe tenþe part,
 þauȝ he hedde þouȝt to say.⁴⁹

In this devotional text, the word associated with Thomas's fart, *pryvetee*, describes the Canon's mysteries as they transcend human powers of speech. This treatise implies how the priest's silent recitation of the Canon does not exclude the laity from hearing these sacred texts so much as it demonstrates the inability of any human to articulate them.

Whether the Canon's silence reflected the general human failure to utter or to understand sacred mysteries, this mortal deficiency was associated with lay worshippers in particular and used to explain their exclusion from hearing liturgical secrets, an estimation of lay capability with which Friar John would well agree. Although the practical purpose of liturgical silence was to preserve the integrity of ritual formulas and the sanctity of sacred mysteries, it also worked to foreclose lay involvement in the formal service even more than did their poor comprehension of Latin. In a related yet different way, silence also impacted the lay people's participation in parts of the liturgy that they could hear. By the time Chaucer was writing, the laity not only could not hear the Canon but also did not participate in the voiced parts of the liturgy as much as they once did; clerks recited what had traditionally been the lay response to the priest, the *responsio populi*.⁵⁰

Popular devotional works seem to collaborate with this effort to make the lay experience of the liturgy a silent one. They tell the worshipper to remain "stille as ston"⁵¹ and to "kepe his silence whan the Masse is in doing."⁵² A sterner warning that the lay folk remain "still as ston" at Mass appears in *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass* in a familiar story about the time Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604) was reading the gospel and saw the devil eavesdrop on some janglers.⁵³ Such talk, the text tells us, these janglers should have kept secret: "þei hedde spoken muchel uncle,/ And in heore hertes gun hyde."⁵⁴ To redress their inability to remain silent while Augustine was preaching, the devil recorded their secret talk. They apparently talked so much that the devil had to try and stretch out the parchment on which he was writing. Tugging on it with his teeth, he went flying and hit his head against the wall, making a loud noise that disturbed the other worshippers and caused Augustine

to cut short the reading. The text goes on to disclose that Pope Gregory (c. 540–604) cited this miracle to illustrate the importance of remaining silent at Mass. It was in fact Gregory who stereotyped the Canon's words, thus making the Canon "canonical."⁵⁵ As I noted in the introduction, liturologists are uncertain as to when the Canon became silent, although the earliest estimates associate the practice with Gregory. To be sure, silence was a practical means of preserving Gregory's efforts at stereotyping the Canon so that it would not undergo popular corruption. So while the janglers in the legend were perhaps not talking during the Canon *per se*, the text's association of the story with Gregory tacitly links the prohibition of jangling with a more significant type of liturgical silence.

Knowing Gregory's twin involvements in jangle-free silence and the Canon illuminates the next caution about talking during Mass found in *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*. The text alleges that Pope Gregory referred to this miracle to explain why the lay folk needed to keep quiet while at Mass:

þat eueri Mon schulde stonde stille,
 Whon he comeþ þe churche with-Inne
 And þenne hou wel þat god may wreke
 Euerich a word þat we speke,
 We do ful muche synne;
 A Prest miȝt be let of his mes
 Al þis world miȝt fare þe wers,
 Vs alle to wo to wyne.⁵⁶

Presumably, idle talk could disrupt the priest at any point in the Mass. The consequences, however, would be the greatest during the silent Canon, when a jangler's noisy divulgence of frivolous secrets would not only be the most conspicuous but also compromise the priest's whispered recitation of Eucharistic secrets. The connection between frivolous speech and irreverence for the Eucharist that is made in the fourteenth-century *Book of Vices and Virtues* shows jangling's particular consequences for the Canon: "þou iangeledest and iapedest bifore God, and þat þou worschipedest God to litle. And after, how þou to litle honourest Goddes body whan þou seye it or whan þou receyvedest it, as whan þou were not worpy."⁵⁷ The phrase "bifore God" implies that the jangling took place during the Eucharistic celebration, evident in the relationship between jangling, the elevation ("whan þou seye" God's body), and reception of communion after Mass ("whan þou receyvedest it"). In the worst-case scenario implicit in this direction, lay jangling substitutes audible vulgar speech for inaudible sacred speech, that is, the silence that surrounded the host's elevation. Jangling fills

the silence intended to safeguard sacred knowledge from the laity, and, in turn, evinces why Eucharistic mysteries were kept secret from them.

In a related vein, Cæsarius of Heisterbach's (c. 1180–1240) *Dialogue on Miracles* includes a Eucharistic miracle that is pertinent to lay people's liturgical silence. After listening to a monk recount a Eucharistic miracle that took place during the Canon, a novice concludes: "I gather from this of how great importance is the complete silence of those present that the priest may find full devotion in saying the Mass in silence." To this astute observation, the monk replies by invoking a Jewish custom of priestly seclusion that suggests the silent Canon, which Friar John likewise referenced in his discussion of famous fasters from Hebrew Scripture: "You are quite right. If a priest under the law entered into the holy of holies to pray for the people, as we read in the case of Zacharias, who stood without for the hour of incense that they might not interrupt him in his prayers, how much more ought the priest of grace who is offering to the father not any corruptible sacrifice for one nation but the son for the salvation of the whole world, to receive at the altar the greatest peace and silence?"⁵⁸ Cæsarius does not explicitly claim that the Canon's silence effects the miracles per se, although he suggests it does by making a case for how silence reflects on and fosters the Canon's sanctity. Indeed, Cæsarius injunction against jangling may in fact reflect on silence's pervasive presence in the lay experience of the liturgy. Taken together, lay jangling and the silent Canon denote the church institution's definition of lay speech as perverse, an idea that Friar John has addressed in his words to Thomas in attempting to vouchsafe clerical privilege.

Although silence both limited lay involvement in the formal liturgy and made the requirement that they not speak during the liturgy an urgent matter, lay devotional texts educated the laity about the Canon and directed lay people in private devotions during it, an issue that I will pursue in great detail in [Chapter 6](#) in my discussion of elevation prayers. The *Lay Folk's Mass Book* even goes so far as to describe liturgical silence as an opportunity for lay worshippers to carry on with their private devotions while the priest just goes about his business at the altar: "when þo preste praies in priuete / tyme of prayere is þen to þe."⁵⁹ Furthermore, it tells lay worshippers that they could indeed speak to God during liturgical silence, a notion that contradicts Friar John's claim that divine conversation is a clerical privilege. For example, before directing its audience to say a short silent prayer, the text insinuates the prayer's divine audience: "saye þese wordis with stille steuen / prively to god of heauen."⁶⁰ So while liturgical silence reserved formal *privy* prayers for the clergy and kept them from vulgarization, it also absorbed the laity in their own *privy* prayer, during which they could talk inwardly to God.

As a representation of these lay *privy* prayers, Thomas's fart bestowed "in pryvetee" to Friar John demonstrates how this form of popular devotion could subvert clerical authority, including its alleged entitlement to sacred discourse. As a response to Friar John's gluttony-driven sermon, the fart also raises questions about what sort of speech should be used to express sacred mysteries and, in particular, whether the human mouth is an appropriate vehicle for them. Despite its designation by early Christian commentators as the proper source of Christian speech, the mouth was also the source of numerous vices. Chaucer realizes the mouth's sinfulness in Friar John, who himself personifies "synne of mouþ" and its twin categories "glotonye" and "wikkede tonge." More broadly, the promotion of "synne of mouþ" to a capital sin in medieval catechetical texts reflects on the campaign about which Craun writes, namely, the Fourth Lateran Council's (1215) efforts to name, teach, and extirpate verbal sins.⁶¹ This initiative, practically speaking, identified the mouth as an origin of deadly vice. If we interpret the practice of liturgical silence in terms of this notion of oral degeneracy, we can recognize that the *Lay Folk's Mass Book's* instruction to pray "with stille steuen" attempts to inspire speech that is not produced by the mouth. Devotional texts that advise the worshipper to pray in his or her own heart, which I mentioned earlier in this chapter, do the same.⁶² While the direction to pray in one's heart during ritual silence makes sense, the full importance of heart-prayer becomes evident in light of texts that tell worshippers to pray with their hearts as well as their mouths even during voiced parts of the liturgy, lest their prayers be mere eloquence with no deeper substance.⁶³ Although it is easy to see how heart-prayer is more sincere than lip service, are we to apply these terms to the fart and judge Thomas's internally generated speech to be a more deeply felt utterance than the friar's orally driven sermon? And although the fart may indicate an attempt to subvert the mouth's sins, does not Thomas's ass-speech also connote ventriloquial corruption of the Christian voice and thus echo rather than correct Friar John's execrable sermon? More fundamentally, why should we think Chaucer intended Thomas's fart to exemplify an idealized form of extra-oral communication rather than have it savor of, say, the fart scenes in *The Miller's Tale*?

Although Thomas's performance may readily bring to mind Nicholas's *faux*-oral utterance, two other tales offer a better context for reading the fart as an earnest sublimation of mouth speech. *The Prioress's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale* both portray holy persons miraculously producing speech through unconventional physical means, namely, after their throats have been cut by non-Christians who tired of listening to them. Close attention to these samples of throatless speech reveals how they

serve to authorize lay *privy* prayers said during liturgical silence. The Second Nun relates how Cecilia, who would become the patron saint of music would also, somewhat ironically, eschew liturgical noise and pray privately: "And whil the organs maden melodie,/ To God allone in herte thus sang she" (8. 134–35). Indeed, as Leo Spitzer points out of Cecilia's *acta*, she is capable of hearing and generating heavenly music inwardly.⁶⁴ The saint's private heart-prayer that removes her from the formal ceremony intimates the extraordinary potential of lay people's *privy* prayers, during which they could communicate with God though unaided by ritual ceremony. An allegory for lay *privy* prayer also underlies the Second Nun's description of Cecilia's ultimate miracle. When her throat is "ycorven" (8. 533) by the pagans who are trying to execute her, Cecilia does not immediately die or, for that matter, fall silent. Rather, she continues to preach, a defiant act that points to the subversive import of lay *privy* prayers said during liturgical silence.

As if mimicking this early Christian saint, the little clergeon of the *Prioress's Tale* persists in singing the Marian hymn *O Alma Redemptoris* even after the Jews have cut his throat in an attempt to silence him. The locale in which the clergeon begins his postmortem performance—the "privee place" (VII. 568) where the Jews have unceremoniously disposed of his body—implies that Chaucer meant his song to represent lay worshippers' *privy* prayers. The little clergeon's *privee*-song is further linked to these private liturgical prayers when the bishop discovers its source: the "greyn" (VII. 662) found on his tongue, a curious image with obvious Eucharistic nuances that Kathleen M. Oliver has pointed out.⁶⁵ Cecilia's and the little clergeon's miraculous performances suggest how lay *privy* speech is authoritative despite institutional attempts to silence it. In addition, these holy examples of throatless speech are vivid examples of how lay *privy* prayer embodies the Augustinian notion of a tongueless speech able to bypass conventional language, a transgressive discourse that Augustine likewise associated with silence.⁶⁶ Although Thomas's fart is not so patently devout as Cecilia's wondrous sermon or the choirboy's unstinting rendition of *O Alma Redemptoris*, it does exemplify an extra-verbal order of communication, one that is perhaps best suited for speaking to God or about the ineffable. Considering how mouth-speech has been compromised in the tale, namely, through Friar John's preaching borne of his gluttony, Thomas's *privy* speech takes on a positive meaning, a type of human utterance able to circumvent the tongue and its sins.

Thomas thus complicates Friar John's easy presumption of privileged clerical access to sacred discourse by calling into question not only which—but also how, or even if—human speakers can articulate it.⁶⁷ The practical conundrum that Thomas poses when he farts—how to

divide this gift equally among the friars—offers a premise for the tale's characters to examine for themselves the assumptions about sacred language that underpin liturgical silence. In the course of their debate over Thomas's dilemma, the fart becomes nothing less than the center of a mock Mass. Eager to recount the insult that Thomas has just dealt him, Friar John finds a sympathetic audience in one of his lay charges, the "lord of that village" (3. 2165). This lord, whom the friar happens upon while at table, assumes the role of a celebrating priest in a vulgarized liturgy during which the fart is commemorated. Like the liturgical account of Christ's sacrificial death, the friar's report of Thomas's perverse offering is received in awed silence. Even the orally overactive friar can hardly bring himself to speak. Not knowing how to respond to the friar's tragic tale, the lord's wife is "stille" (3. 2200), the term devotional texts use to depict how the laity should comport themselves during Mass.⁶⁸

And if we regard the lord as a lay person who meditates on the clergyman's pseudo-Eucharistic performance, we can apprehend in his silence the "stille" worshipper's inward speech:

The lord sat stille as he were in a traunce,
And in his herte he rolled up and doun,
"How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun
To shewe swich a probleme to the frere?" (3. 2216–19)

The lord is "stille" but speaks "in his herte" as if engaging in private prayer. As if divinely omniaudient, the reader gets to hear the lord's thoughts as he ponders Thomas's pseudo-Eucharistic mystery. As I noted earlier, the lord's musings on how to divide up the fart's "soun and savour" (3. 2227) has suggested for critics the Pentecostal winds that gave the apostles skill in preaching. The tongues that the apostles receive represent a fantastic xenoglossia, an ability to speak to men of all nations regardless of their native tongue. In this miraculous instance of multilingual speech, Pentecost remedied and thus evoked the destruction of the tower of Babel, the biblical avatar for unrestrained and deviant speech exemplified in Friar John.⁶⁹ Scholarship that considers this closing scene of *The Summoner's Tale* in terms of Pentecostal imagery and its significance to language does not refute but rather complements my interpretation of the scene's relevance to Eucharistic silence. We can see how these readings are mutually implicative by noting that the charism of tongues does not bring a mastery of different languages; the person so gifted does not literally understand what he or she is saying. Rather, as J. Stephen Russell reminds us, it resembles more "a language between

hearts, a 'speech' that bypasses the verbal or cognitive level and communicates movements of the soul directly," that is, a silent language.⁷⁰ Thus, as did the apostles' Pentecostal "gift of tongues," so did liturgical silence and the "*privy* prayers" said during the Mass evoke a transcendent, interiorized order of language.

The choice subject of the lord's silent thoughts, however, does not reflect all that well on the meditation that engrossed lay worshippers during liturgical silence. In fact, it seems only to substantiate received notions of lay depravity to which Friar John has alluded in his sermon. Yet, we must remember that the lord does not meditate simply on a fart but also on a specific riddle that Thomas has posed: how to capture and spread his fart's sound and scent equally among the friars. This dilemma cannot but call to mind the theological question of how Christ was physically present in each and every Eucharistic host, a sacramental mystery that came under heterodox scrutiny by Wycliffites, a scrutiny with which Chaucer was surely familiar. While the silent Canon does not explicitly address this Eucharistic mystery, it does include the transubstantiation prayers, the ritual formula that accomplishes the miracle of Christ's Real Presence in the sacrament.

The lord's response, as Fiona Somerset points out, turns Thomas's insult into a scholastic problem.⁷¹ In particular, the lord tackles Thomas's pseudo-Eucharistic puzzle by accounting for the way sound behaves, an approach that suggests his meditation on this conundrum also has implications for its ritual celebration in silence. Chaucer's coupling of Eucharistic mysteries and acoustic theory is significant given that the intellectual discourse most pertinent to late medieval Eucharistic debates was in fact the Aristotelian category of quantity, which William of Ockham (1288–1348) and John Wyclif (d. 1384) each drew on to expound their differing opinions on Christ's presence in every Eucharistic host. After the lord narrows his area of scientific inquiry, he discovers new obstacles to solving the friar's problem when he observes that sound

Nis but of eir reverberacioun,
And evere it wasteth litel by litel away.
Ther is no man kan deemen, by my fey,
If that it were departed equally. (3. 2234–37)

The lord's characterization of sound as a vibration that emanates from its source and then gradually dissipates speaks to Chaucer's discourse on sound's movement in the *House of Fame*. Explaining to the dreamer how every sound will eventually come to "Fames Hous" (786), the Eagle

compares sound's resonance to the concentric circles generated when a stone is thrown into water:

And ryght anoon thow shalt see wel
 That whel will cause another whel,
 And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
 Every sercle causynge other
 Wydder than hymselfe was. (793–97)

The image that the eagle invokes to describe sound's movement, a series of progressively widening wheels, illuminates the logic behind the cartwheel solution that the lord's squire ultimately proposes: "Lat brynge a cartwheel heere into this halle;/ But looke that it have his spokes alle—/ Twelve spokes hath a cartwheel comunly" (3. 2253–7). Given how "wheels" work to circulate sound in the *House of Fame*, it stands to reason that using a cartwheel to divide Thomas's fart would alleviate the lord's concern that the fart will "wasteth litel by litel away" and thus fail to satisfy each friar in John's convent.⁷² In considering the significance of these wheels, we should note that in *The House of Fame* and *The Summoner's Tale* Chaucer elaborates on medieval acoustic theories, none of which describe the amplification of sounds as they get farther from their sources. Chaucer's "cartwheel solution" represents his own fantastic explanation of sound's movement, one that resonates with orthodox views about Christ's Real Presence in each and every host. Just as the cartwheel will transform and perpetuate the fart's elusive essence after it departs from Thomas's body, so will the infinite number of hosts disseminated during Mass encompass Christ's transubstantiated physical presence.

In addition to broaching the question of Christ's bodily presence in every transubstantiated host, the lord's attempt to troubleshoot against the fart's dwindling reverberations also reflects on the ritual silence that shrouds Eucharistic mysteries. In particular, we can perceive in the lord's rumination Chaucer's ideas on how silence aids in keeping Eucharistic secrets a secret. The lord notes that as the fart wastes away, the question of how its sound behaves becomes more and more inscrutable. If we take the fart's eventual silence to represent Eucharistic silence, we can grasp the deeper significance of the lord's *privy* thought: Eucharistic mysteries would be understandable to the lay folk if they were plainly heard by them. As a comment on the lay experience of liturgical silence, the lord insinuates that silence does not guard knowledge of sacred mysteries per se but rather helps mystify knowledge that would otherwise be readily apprehensible.⁷³ In fact, while silence protects sacred formula from the lay people and thus serves to safeguard this clerical privilege, it

may even conceal meaningless formula, as it did when the Lollard priest William Ramsbury used it to obscure his heterodox performance of the Eucharistic mysteries, a phenomenon that I discussed in [Chapter 4](#).⁷⁴ In Ramsbury's liturgy, the lay audience would not have noticed that he was only "mouthing" the Canon's words (as opposed to pronouncing them "plene et integre" as mandated by diocesan statutes)⁷⁵ because they were normally recited in silence. Thus, Ramsbury not only mocked the orthodox performance of Eucharistic secrets but also their content. In a related vein, Wyclif argued that Eucharistic silence served to obscure orthodox Eucharistic doctrine. In writing on the sacrament and "Gods priveytes," Wyclif alleged that

þei dar not putt out her feiþe to þo puple, and putt hit by oure feythe, and stoned þerby. And certis one of þese þree þinges semes to meete hom, þat ouper þei con not, or dar not, or þei travel by envye. God helpe us few Cristen men þat stonden in þis feythe, ffor leesynges and flaterynges of freris spreden ful wyde. And, as Crist shewed bred before þo sacringe, and bad hem all eete þerof, so he schewid aftir.⁷⁶

Albeit in a different way than Ramsbury, Wyclif observed how orthodoxy deployed silence to conceal sacred secrets that in fact should not be mysterious.

In *The Summoner's Tale* the lord's remarks on the problem of the fart's division provide a wry commentary on Eucharistic secrets and the practical effects of their concealment in silence. We get further insight into the fart's significance to the tale's portrait of verbal performances when we consider the engineer behind the cartwheel solution, the lord's squire. The squire has observed the friar in action earlier that day at Mass where he, as a lay worshipper, would have been excluded from hearing the Eucharistic secrets. It is he, however, who now holds the privileged knowledge of how to crack Thomas's pseudo-Eucharistic mystery. The logic behind Jankyn's unique solution—that Thomas should fart at the hub of a cartwheel so that its sound and smell can travel along the wheel's spokes to each of the friars—has piqued critical curiosity, including from scholars who invoke religious iconography to explain it.⁷⁷ Particularly relevant to my argument is Alan Levitan's point that the cartwheel solution brings to mind Eucharistic imagery, namely, iconographic depictions of the Last Supper that show Christ and the apostles sitting at a circular table.⁷⁸ A more familiar religious analog for the cartwheel is the Round Table of Arthurian legend, a Eucharistic society that is poorly emulated by Friar John's convent despite medieval friars' claims to an apostolic mission.

One specific stipulation of the squire's solution responds quite directly to the friar's claim about privileged fraternal access to divine secrets.

Jankyn insists that Friar John put his nose right under the wheel's "nave" atop which Thomas will fart (3. 2266), an arrangement that suggests John the evangelist's pose at the Last Supper. In medieval legends, John is portrayed with his head in Christ's lap (i.e., his "nave") during this protolitururgical meal, a sign of the apostle's favor with Christ. The homily for Saint John's feast day in the *Speculum Sacerdotale* describes the apostle's special vantage in terms that speak to Friar John's experience of Thomas's gift: "he lay at the breste of his maister Crist and saw there the preuytees of heaven."⁷⁹ *The Northern Passion* adds that while in this pose an angel disclosed to John "many a selkuth preuete."⁸⁰ Friar John has pretended to such intimacy with Christ in his claim that he, like all friars, has privileged knowledge of "Cristes secree thynges" (3. 1871). Unlike his apostolic namesake who becomes acquainted with sacred "preuytees of heaven," Friar John is entitled to the vulgar offering that Thomas has "hyd in pryvetee" (2143). Friar John's claim to special knowledge of Christ's secrets due to his rigorous fasting is transmuted into his privileged contact with the fart, a secretion that emanates from his well-fed lay charge.

In addition to solving Thomas's pseudo-Eucharistic mystery, the squire makes another important stipulation for the fart's distribution, one that has implications for religious speech. He declares that because Friar John "hath to-day taught us so much good/With prechyng in the pulpit ther he stood" (3. 2281–2), it is he who should enjoy the "first fruyt" (2277) of Thomas's fart. Thus, while it evokes the lay Eucharistic experience, the squire's revelation also reflects on another sort of liturgical speech, namely, the friar's sermons that he performs to satisfy his own gustatory desires rather than to disseminate the Word. The end of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* suggests how the "fruyt" of Thomas's fart critiques the friar's abuse of the Word. Sorry that his own poorly timed speech has caused him to lose his prey, the fox condemns the speaker who "jangleth whan he sholde holde his pees" (VII. 3435), a moral that the Nun's Priest soon repeats: "Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille" (VII. 3443). In his closing remark on errant speech, the Nun's Priest appeals to the prophet Jeremiah's critique of false prophets, the ventriloquial belly-speakers who falsely laid claim to divine speech. The prophet relates God's comment on such ventriloquists: "If a prophet has a dream, let him tell his dream; if he has my word, let him speak my word in truth. What has chaff to do with the fruit?"⁸¹ The Nun's Priest's allusion to this verbal "fruyt" thus signifies the divinely-sanctioned speech that pagan ventriloquists only pretended to articulate.

When read in terms of the Nun's Priest's moral taken from Jeremiah, the import of Thomas's fart becomes additionally ambiguous. As a

response to Friar John's sermon, Thomas's fart represents the "fruyt" that exposes the friar as a false prophet, a ventriloquist whose speech derives from his hungry belly. The fart, however, is itself belly-speech, and as such resembles the ventriloquial speech that Jeremiah condemns. Its double meaning as both the divinely endorsed "fruyt" and ventriloquial speech reveals how the fart parodies as well as illuminates the Word's significance as a standard for ethical speech. Like Thomas's fart, the Word itself is, strictly speaking, ventriloquial "belly-speech." The Word's emanation from the Virgin Mary's womb accounts for early church commentators' objections to the *pythia*, the seer at the Delphic oracle whose prophecies arose from the earth beneath her, up through her lower body, and out of her foaming mouth. Borne of the Virgin Mary's belly, the Word itself is also an example of ventriloquial speech, a subversion of mouth speech that avoids potential distortion by the mouth by emanating from an alternative venue. Reading the Word as a positive example of ventriloquial speech sheds light on examples in *The Canterbury Tales* of speech that undermines its conventional source in the mouth, namely, Thomas's fart, the little clergeon's postmortem song, and Cecelia's throatless speech. Tellingly, each of these performances derives from a lay person who challenges local or ecclesiastical power. By having the squire designate Thomas's speech as "fruyt" that Friar John deserves to enjoy, Chaucer thus validates the nonoral speech of a lay person's silent liturgical experience over clerical speech that does not reflect the Word.

In *The Summoner's Tale*, then, laypeople have the last word—not to mention the last laugh—on Friar John, particularly in his capacity as an errant speaker. As Somerset points out, Chaucer has translated clerical authority even further than the Wycliffites, "right off the edge," in ascribing subversive power to Thomas's fart and Jankyn's solution.⁸² The friar, of course, receives the fart as blasphemy. And his earlier opinion that Thomas's ire comes from his demonic possession is echoed by the lord, who claims that Thomas must be a "demonyak" (3. 2240). This allegation of demonic possession goes back to the tale's opening, which depicted friars swarming out of the devil's ass until he shut his tail "ful stille" (3. 1699), a scene that I identified as signaling the tale's investment in ventriloquial speech. In attributing Thomas's base performance to demonic possession, the lord makes a subtle connection between the devil's tail-speech and Thomas's, both of which, in turn, represent the voice's ventriloquial relocation. The tale's other characters, however, clear Thomas of demonic possession by defining the source of his speech positively in terms of the Word: "Touchynge the cherl, they seyde, subtiltee/ And heigh wit made hym speken as he spak;/ He nys no fool, ne no demonyak" (3. 2290–2). The "subtiltee" (2290) that inspires Thomas to

“speak” also calls to mind the devil’s “subtiltee” (3. 1420) that the unscrupulous summoner wished to know in *The Friar’s Tale*. In light of the rhetorical significance of the devil’s *subtiltee* that I discussed in [Chapter 4](#), we can likewise regard Thomas’s “subtiltee” (2290) as connoting subtle textual meaning, the *subtilitas* that Wyclif identified as residing beneath the Bible’s literal words. The scriptural significance of Thomas’s fart is also evident in its other attributed source, his “wit” (2291), a word that meant facility with interpreting scripture. Recall Friar John’s contention that he does his best to interpret scripture for his lay audience even though he has but a “symple wit” (1789). By rooting Thomas’s vulgar speech in *subtiltee* and *heigh wit*, Chaucer thus describes the fart in terms of scriptural exegesis, discourse that, as the Friar pilgrim has warned the Wife of Bath in *The Friar’s Prologue*, should be purely a clerical domain yet, as we observe in *The Summoner’s Tale*, is not manifest in Friar John’s sermons.

Thomas’s vulgar yet sincere ventriloquism of the silent privy prayers in *The Summoner’s Tale* raises important questions that I will pursue in the next chapter: what did the lay worshippers know of these Eucharistic prayers reserved for the clergy? And, what exactly was the form and function of their own privy prayers performed while the priest recited his own? Expanding on my argument in this chapter, “Playing the Prophet” also discusses lay subversion of the liturgical formulas in which the clergy ventriloquized Christ’s words at the Last Supper.

CHAPTER 6

PLAYING THE PROPHET

The text known as N-Town Passion Play I is a series of dramas that represent biblical and extra-scriptural events from Palm Sunday through Holy Thursday.¹ Stephen Spector suggests that the manuscript was first compiled in the mid to late fifteenth century and continued to be revised, quite possibly, into the sixteenth century.² The most liturgical of the extant cycles, N-Town's provenance has been associated, as Gail McMurray Gibson points out, with Bury St. Edmunds in East Anglia, an area known for its vibrant orthodox and heterodox religious cultures.³ As Penelope Granger argues, the cycle was probably performed for lay audiences, as it most likely traveled to towns in the southwest Norfolk-Suffolk border, which saw a high concentration of dramatic performances.⁴ Although the N-Town plays perhaps exhibit some level of monastic input, Colin Fewer argues that "they were being produced primarily for a wealthy and urbanized lay audience."⁵ Indeed, Gibson sees in the plays a "hybrid blend of monastic and lay spirituality that is such a signature of fifteenth-century Suffolk and Norfolk culture."⁶

Of the pageants in the N-Town cycle, the most detailed is the Passion Play I, whose staging of the Last Supper publicizes actions normally shrouded in ritual silence. For this, the play speaks both to the orthodox zeal among monastic and lay subjects in East Anglia and also to a subversion that characterized the region's heterodox strain. Although at Mass the transubstantiation formula was recited by the celebrating priest just once over the bread and once over the wine, in the N-Town Passion Play it is spoken numerous times by the Christ-actor in the Last Supper play and once by the angel that visits him in Gethsemane in the Betrayal play. Taken together, these ventriloquial performances of the transubstantiation formula suggest the playwright's desire that his audience know of these words contained in ritual silence. The actors' ventriloquial performances of the transubstantiation formula were thus the most significant

moments in what was the fullest representation of the Passion in all the English cycle plays. Although it is impossible to know the exact intentions of the anonymous N-Town playwright, his publication of the Eucharistic prayers amounts to a subversion of conventional ritual silence.

This chapter has three parts. The first examines the Christ-actor's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula in the Last Supper play. The playwright's impulse both to acknowledge the formula's sanctity and also to show how this sanctity could be violated is evident in his portrait of Judas, who gets to hear the transubstantiation formula when Christ blesses the bread and wine yet from whom the Christ-actor later withholds it when he speaks it to each of his apostles when giving them communion, a performance that breaks with ritual convention. I argue that the play's spectators are invited to identify with the Judas-character as they too are privy to ritual secrets that should be withheld from them. This chapter's second part considers how the Christ-actor's ventriloquial performance would have affected lay worshippers by accounting for their prior knowledge of the transubstantiation formula. It examines contemporary devotional texts that informed both literate and also unlearned worshippers of Christ's words spoken at the Last Supper. These texts illuminate the different impulses—educative and subversive—that underlie the N-Town playwright's decision to publicize on stage the secret transubstantiation formula. This chapter's third part considers another instance in which the transubstantiation formula is ventriloquized in this N-Town play, namely, when the angel-actor speaks it to Christ in Gethsemane. We get context for this unusual ventriloquial performance in the scene's liturgical framework. The angel's speech that comes immediately before the transubstantiation formula is in fact an elevation prayer, a text included in lay devotional materials and recited by literate worshippers during the host's transubstantiation. While speaking the elevation prayer and transubstantiation formula, the angel holds up a host and chalice. In staging the popular moment of the host's elevation, the playwright thus acknowledges the visual orientation of devotion. Yet, he ultimately encourages his audience to practice the vocally oriented mode of religious expression that is represented in the angel's elevation prayer that would become a hallmark of Protestant piety.

Christ's Ventriloquism in the N-Town Passion Play I

To understand the N-Town playwright's investment in something so serious as staging liturgical secrets, we must first recognize the scope and depth of this Passion play, which is the longest and most involved of any in the English cycles. It includes prologues by Satan and John

the Baptist, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Conspiracy, the Last Supper, the Betrayal, an extra-scriptural scene in which Mary Magdalene tells Christ's mother of his arrest, and a final scene known as the Procession of Saints, which includes two expositors introducing the 11 loyal apostles and John the Baptist. All of these episodes were performed as a single unit. By comparison, the York cycle had six separate performances to stage all these episodes. Towneley's Conspiracy and Capture play and Chester's Judas's Plot, Last Supper, and Betrayal of Christ cover the Jews' plotting with Judas, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, and the Betrayal. Yet, these cycles omit other material such as Christ's procession into Jerusalem, Christ's forgiving Mary Magdalene, his healing of two sick paupers, the conversation between Mary Magdalene and Christ's mother, and the final scene portraying the salutation of the saints. The Cornish collection likewise includes only a brief conversation between the Jewish high priest Caiaphas and Judas, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, and the Betrayal, thus lacking the depth of the N-Town performance. Indeed, it is apparent that all the other cycles and the Cornish play stage a series of Passion plays analogous to yet not equivalent in scope and length to the N-Town Passion Play I.

N-Town is also unique among the cycles for the liturgy's formidable influence on the Passion Play I. Although the influence of the Mass on late medieval cycle plays has not been fully explored, scholars have long noted that the N-Town Passion Play I draws on the Eucharistic celebration in its staging of the Last Supper.⁷ Prosser notes of the Last Supper play that "attention is focused entirely on the institution of the sacrament."⁸ Woolf describes the scene as "not the historical Last Supper but a liturgical act of communion."⁹ Spector remarks that the play includes "the most elaborately detailed and reconstituted portrayal of the Last Supper in Middle English drama."¹⁰ Scherb comments on the liturgical nuances of the N-Town staging of the Last Supper and the impact the staging would have had on its audience: "By enacting the institution of the Mass in such a manner, the scene thus functions as a paradigm for all future acts of the presentation of the Eucharist through the liturgy."¹¹ Noting similarities between Dirk Bouts's "Altarpiece of the Blessed Sacrament" and the N-Town play, Coletti argues "there can be little doubt that Bouts and the N-Town dramatist intended a correspondence between this moment [the consecration] isolated from the Passion story and the central action of the Mass."¹² She further points out that while earlier representations had focused on narrative elements such as Christ's identification of his traitor or John's falling asleep on Christ's breast, late medieval artists responded to the increasing importance of Eucharistic devotion by portraying the scene of sacramental consecration and communion. Fewer argues contra

these critics that “[t]he Passion sequences do not incorporate elements of the Mass; rather, the plays focus on the intrigues of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities in their efforts to sway public opinion away from Christ.”¹³ Although an analysis of civil and ecclesiastical authorities is beyond the scope of this study, it will prove the liturgy’s formidable influence on N-Town Passion Play I, in particular, how the playwright flouts as well as reinforces the sanctity of the Eucharistic consecration.

Writing on the influence of the Mass on N-Town, Scherb argues that the dramatist “borrow[ed] something of the authority of liturgical ceremonies while at the same time explicating them.”¹⁴ The playwright invests the text with the “authority” of the Mass in numerous ways, the most significant of which is his attention to the transubstantiation formula. He also invokes this liturgical context in subtler, less subversive ways. In N-Town Passion Play I, Christ not only institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist as he does in the Chester and Cornish versions but also celebrates the Last Supper as a priest would during a Mass. N-Town depicts Christ consecrating a Eucharistic host (“oble”) and then distributing communion individually to his apostles, acts that reflect medieval liturgical conventions rather than a historical Last Supper derived from scriptural accounts or iconographic representations of Christ and the apostles sharing the Passover bread. N-Town thus implies how the Last Supper is an archetype for the Mass and, in turn, invokes the Mass as a context for the Last Supper play. Audience members are thereby encouraged to view the Christ-actor’s ventriloquism of liturgical secrets as informed by their experience of the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist.

The N-Town play’s mimicry of these liturgical conventions is in fact embedded in another ventriloquial context familiar to its audience, that is, the celebrating priest’s emulation of Christ’s actions at the Last Supper. Twelfth-century liturgical commentaries on the Mass used in monastic and popular contexts including those of Lothar of Segni (Pope Innocent III) and Pseudo-Hugh de St. Victor take a cue from Alamar of Metz in describing the priest as “standing in” for Christ. As Mary M. Schaefer argues, this rendered the Mass not just a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice but also a reenactment of it. If the priest’s moral life was modeled after Christ’s, then he had the power to summon Christ’s presence at the altar. Christ would thus work through the priest’s hands to consecrate the sacrament. The implication of this role-playing is that the priest would both act as Christ and reenact Christ’s performance at the Last Supper, ventriloquizing Christ’s sacramental words to become Christ rather than merely to commemorate his actions.¹⁵

While echoing the conventional performances of the Last Supper and the Mass, the N-Town Christ-actor’s ventriloquial performance also had

subversive import, which is evident in the playwright's staging of the Last Supper alongside the Conspiracy. In this juxtaposition unique to the N-Town Passion Play I, the playwright collapses the Holy Week chronology to portray the conspiracy against Christ associated with Wednesday of Holy Week as simultaneous with Holy Thursday's Last Supper. The linking of these episodes has the effect of accommodating Judas and his divided obligations. Masterfully multitasking, Judas slips out unnoticed from the Last Supper to join the Jews' conspiracy, then returns, and leaves early (at Christ's request) to go back to the conspirators. This arrangement discloses a subtle—and nasty—aspect of Judas's character. With the Jews, he works out the practical details of the plan to betray Christ and then actually decides to follow through on his plan at the Last Supper. Ironically enough, Judas helps to fulfill the sacrifice that Christ predicts on one scaffold by moving to another scaffold to discuss the pragmatics of Christ's capture, an important effect of the adjacent staging. N-Town's portrait of Judas's simultaneous participation in these two events not only emphasizes his traducery but also calls attention to his role in helping Christ's promise come to pass. Furthermore, N-Town's inclusion of the extra-liturgical scene of the Jews' conspiracy and its staging alongside the Last Supper draws the audience's attention to Judas and his movements on stage, his shuttling back and forth between the conspiracy and the Last Supper. This focus on Judas's actions might well cause the audience to reflect on their own experience of watching the Last Supper play. Judas violates the sanctity of the Holy Thursday proto-liturgy and performs on stage the transgression of Eucharistic secrecy in which the playwright and, by extension, the audience engage. The playwright thus disposes his audience to receiving this performance of the Eucharistic ceremony as a violation of sacred secrecy, not unlike that committed by Judas.

The N-Town playwright presumes that his audience is fascinated by Judas's knowledge of Christ's secrets, a fascination that is evident in the frequent use of the words "sotyl," "prevy," and their variants in the Conspiracy play. These references to secrecy clue the audience members in to the fact that they, like Judas, are privy to a secret discourse, albeit one seemingly at odds with the liturgical secrets that will be revealed downstage in the Last Supper play. When Judas slips out of the Last Supper to meet the Jewish priests, he takes the audience into his confidence about his secret plan to betray Christ ["Now cowntyrfetyd I haue a prevy treson,/ My maysterys power for to felle" (27/269-70)] and the means by which he will accomplish this plot ["Be prevy meny I xal asay;/ Myn intent I xal fulfyll" (27/274-5)].¹⁶ When he leaves the conspirators to return to Christ's company, Judas again flaunts his capacity for stealth, boasting that he will now "sotely go seke

my maystyr ageyn" (27/333). Lest the Judas-actor slip out of character, the N-Town playwright (or compiler) includes a stage direction for his reentry onto the scaffold where the Last Supper is performed: "Here Judas goth in sotylly wheras he cam fro" (s.d. after 336). In addition to characterizing Judas's actions, this language of secrecy also infuses the Jewish priests' discussion of the tactics behind the conspiracy. Caiaphas contends that the conspirators need to "cowntyrfete all þe sotyltēs þat ȝe kan" (27/98). Worried that Christ's numerous followers will impede his arrest, Rewfyn adds, "Ȝet o thyng, serys: Ȝe must aspye/ And make a ryth sotyl ordenawns/ Be what menys ȝe may come hym bye" (27/133–5). After Judas departs, Annas mandates that "[a] sotyl meny" (27/340) be there to apprehend Christ, a task that Caiaphas contends needs to be carried out "preuely" (27/347) that very night. Included among these secret stratagems is the kiss itself, a "prevy" token (27/320) that Rewfyn says is necessary since the men arresting Christ may not be able to identify him since they may not have seen him before. These conspiratorial secrets, this provision in particular, establish a context for the Christ-actor's ventriloquism of liturgical secrets that will occur in the Last Supper play. Even as the conspirators decide upon this infamous "prevy" token by which to identify Christ, he is visible on stage, sharing the Passover meal with his 11 less treacherous apostles and preparing to share the Eucharistic secrets with them.¹⁷

When Judas "sotely" (27/333) reinserts himself into the Eucharistic meal he and, by extension, the audience, are just in time to hear Christ's explanation of the Eucharistic sacrifice: "Wheche xal be of my body, þat am ȝoure hed,/ Weche xal be shewed to ȝow be a mystery/ Of my flesch and blood in forme of bred" (27/362–4). Christ goes on to consecrate the host in words that evoke the transubstantiation formula: "And þus þurwe þi myth, fadyr, and blyssyng of me,/ Of þis þat was bred is mad my body" (379–80). His subsequent commentary on these words clearly identifies them as the powerful formula the priest uttered in silence at Mass: "Bretheryn, be þe [vertu] of þese wordys þat [re] hercyd be,/ Dis þat shewyth as bred to ȝoure apparens/ Is mad þe very flesche and blod of me/ To þe weche þei þat wole be savyd must geve credens" (27/381–4). In referring to these words' power, the playwright alludes to the clerical privilege that they imply and, by extension, the transgression wrought when the Christ-actor ventriloquizes them for the play's lay audience to hear.

The question that arises is how other medieval English Last Supper plays portray this critical scene, whether they also include the Christ-actor's ventriloquism of liturgical secrets included in the silent Canon. Chester is the only other cycle drama to include the recital of the

transubstantiation formula in its portrait of the institution of the Eucharist:

“This bread I give here my blessing.
Takes, eate, brethren, at my byddinge,
for, leewe you well, withowt leasinge
this is my body
that shall dye for all mankynde
in remission of there synne.
This give I you on me to mynd
aye after evermore.” (89–96)

The Cornish play likewise includes the blessing of the bread (764) and the wine (824). In the York manuscript, a leaf (at least 65–70 lines) is lost. Woolf notes that the play probably is like Chester in following biblical accounts of the major action: Christ’s prediction of his death, his words over the bread and wine, his sharing the sop with Judas, and his washing of the disciples’ feet.¹⁸ Towneley’s complete omission of the institution of the sacrament perhaps suggests the playwright’s influence by John’s gospel, which does the same. We might suspect, as does Woolf, that the Towneley play followed John’s gospel in order to avoid difficult and contentious religious doctrine.¹⁹ Yet, since the play’s manuscript was written in about 1475–1500—much earlier than Chester’s manuscripts, which date from the sixteenth century—it is curious that Towneley rather than Chester would exclude conventional religious beliefs that would become a main subject for Protestant attack.

Also curious is the N-Town play’s location in East Anglia, an area associated with the proto-Protestant Lollards, a fact that would have rendered the Christ-actor’s recital of religious doctrine a subversive performance despite and because of its orthodoxy. In the *Passion Play I*, he not only discloses the transubstantiation formula at the logical moment—when he consecrates the host—but also speaks it 11 other times, that is, when he distributes communion to each apostle except Judas. Christ gives the Eucharist individually to his apostles as the priest would have to communicants at the medieval liturgy, a format unusual in Last Supper plays, in which Christ passes the bread around the table to his apostles. The N-Town play’s arrangement, however, allows him to speak the transubstantiation formula to each loyal apostle, reciting a verbatim English rendition of the transubstantiation formula: “This is my body, flesch and blode,/ Þat for þe xal dey upon þe rode” (27/449–50). For the Christ-actor’s unusual rendition of the transubstantiation formula when distributing communion, the playwright might have chosen the Latin version

used at Mass during the consecration. This usage would not be unique in the N-Town cycle, which includes Latin in the scene between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth. As Granger points out, Mary's exalted status is evident in her recital of the *Magnificat* in Latin.²⁰ A Latin performance of the transubstantiation formula would have retained the liturgical scene's sanctity as well as kept the formula from being readily intelligible to the lay people. However, as I will note in the second part of this chapter, a Latin performance could have been even more transgressive, as it would have conveyed the exact words used in the liturgy. N-Town's use of the vernacular formula in the Last Supper play serves to fully include the audience in the Christ-actor's disclosure of it to his 11 followers.

More importantly, the vernacular transubstantiation formula that accompanies the individual distribution of the sacrament calls attention to the Christ-actor's decision to withhold the sacred words from Judas. Instead of reiterating the formula, he says, "Judas, art þu avysyd what þu xalt take?" (27/451). This ominous address to Judas when offering him the host identifies Judas as the traitor. In doing so, it reworks the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper. In John's and Matthew's gospels, Christ identifies his traitor as the one who would dip his hand in the dish when he did, a prediction that was in fact fulfilled when Judas and Christ simultaneously dipped the sop. N-Town substitutes the ordinary bread with the Eucharist, a provision that allows Christ to reveal his knowledge of Judas's "prevy treason" by keeping from him the most sacred of clerical secrets, the transubstantiation formula that he has divulged to the other apostles when giving them each communion and, in effect, the whole N-Town audience viewing the play. Through the Christ-actor's cautionary words to Judas, the N-Town playwright discloses a desire to preserve the sanctity of these sacred secrets yet also admits that these have already been violated, both in Judas's treason and his own staging of the Last Supper.

Judas's momentous act of taking the Eucharist serves to call attention to the Christ-actor's ventriloquism of the Eucharistic formula by which the host was consecrated (a performance that Judas heard) and distributed (in words withheld from Judas). The grave consequences of Judas's deed and thus the import of the Christ-actor's withholding the formula from him would have been apparent to the N-Town audience due to the intense pace of the action that ensues. Consider what happens in a mere twenty lines: Christ withholds the formula from Judas (27/451); Judas receives communion (s.d. after 456); Christ warns him of his damnation for doing so (455); Christ tells Judas to go finish his business with the conspirators, at which point Judas departs from the Last Supper (s.d. after 465). Then, an authority no less than Satan himself comes on stage (s.d.

after 465) to offer Judas a special commendation for his evil deed (470). This quick succession of events focuses attention on Judas's reception of communion, an act to which scriptural accounts of the Last Supper do not pay particular attention. In fact, they differ on whether Judas even stayed for communion. In Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22, Judas remains throughout the feast. In John 13, the institution of the Eucharist is not narrated in the Last Supper and Judas leaves after the foot washing, an episode omitted in the other three gospels. John and Luke each portray Judas's possession when he ate the sop, an event suggested in Satan's appearance on stage. The cycle plays themselves represent the scene with slight differences. In Chester, Judas leaves after receiving the sacrament. In the Cornish, York, and Towneley versions, Judas stays for the consumption of the bread and wine as well as the foot washing. Although all of these plays stage Judas's reception of communion, none calls attention to it as the N-Town play does.

Judas's hearing of the transubstantiation formula and reception of communion call to mind the wealth of late medieval devotional texts that associate Judas with unworthy recipients and ministers of the Eucharist and thus identify him as a threat to Eucharistic sanctity. For instance, Nicholas Love's *Speculum* compares Judas to the Lollards, who receive the Eucharist unworthily for their disbelief in Christ's bodily presence in it. Although a human may not understand this mystery, anyone who does not recognize it is unlike the apostles who "laften all hir bodily reson & witte" and is more akin to Judas, who "was reprouede for his falshe de & misbeleue, & þerfore he recyued þat blessed sacrament in to his dampnacion."²¹ Love cautions his audience that such damnation will also befall anyone who regards the consecrated host as merely bread, an obvious attack on the Lollards. In a related vein, the chantry priest John Audelay's (fl. 1426) early fifteenth-century poem "*De meritis misse*" brings up Judas's postcommunion possession recorded in Luke and John to warn his lay audience against receiving the Eucharist without having confessed deadly sins.²² This view is reiterated in *De sacramento altaris* by William of Shoreham, a late-fourteenth-century poet and vicar of Chart, who argues that sinful recipients of the Eucharist will be damned. The sacrament itself, however, remains untainted by sinful ministers. Judas mortally sinned in taking the Eucharist but—Shoreham assures his audience—unworthy priests cannot pollute it because the sacrament is incapable of contamination: "Þe sacrement nys na þa wors/ Ðaʒ þat Iudas hyt toke."²³ While he means to guarantee Eucharistic sanctity, Shoreham tacitly discloses the concern that unworthy ministers could indeed compromise the sacrament. Taken together, these texts that invoke Judas's unworthy reception of communion suggest how the N-Town dramatization of this

act speaks to cultural anxieties about threats to Eucharistic sanctity. In particular, the Christ-actor's ventriloquism of the formula for the other apostles and act of withholding it from Judas reflect on a desire for scrupulosity regarding the sacrament's consecration.

Contexts for Interpreting the Ventriloquism of the Transubstantiation Formula

The N-Town Christ-actor's disclosure of the transubstantiation formula to Judas and subsequent impulse to withhold it from him raise questions about the audience's prior familiarity with the phrase. While the N-Town cycle has been associated with monastic performers and audiences in East Anglia, it also was probably viewed by lay audiences as it traveled in the region. In either case, the audience would have been composed of noncelebrating clergy or lay people, both ignorant of the Eucharistic prayers shrouded in ritual silence. Although their knowledge of the formula could have come via nonstandard performances of the Mass or nontextual sources,²⁴ close inspection of surviving devotional texts can give us a sense of the lay worshippers' knowledge and understanding of it as well as the rest of the Canon. *The History of the Mass* includes an account of the Canon for a lay audience that is also found in liturgical commentaries by Pseudo-Alcuin, Honorius, Jean Beleth, and Pseudo-Hugh of Saint Victor.²⁵ In this cautionary tale about the singing shepherds that I addressed in my introduction, silence works to protect not only the integrity of liturgical formulas but also clerical privilege. In a related vein, *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass* explains that the transubstantiation formula needs to be guarded from lay worshippers, which is why the text excludes "fyue wordes wiþouten drede,/þat no mon but a prest schulde rede,"²⁶ that is, the Latin transubstantiation formula, *Hoc est enim corpus meum*.

Although these two texts make a concerted effort to safeguard the transubstantiation formula, many others include vernacular versions of it. One such is Shoreham's *De sacramento altaris*, which is comprised of a series of questions and answers that address issues such as the mystery of Christ's sacramental presence and a worshipper's worthiness to receive the Eucharist. While it does not contain so detailed an account of the Last Supper as do the synoptic gospels, the text does record the transubstantiation formula as they also do. The author gives a context for this utterance:

For þo hijs tyme was ycome
No leng to dwelle here,

Pat wete bredded and honde he toke,
 Per he set atte sopere,
 And seyde
 "Take and etep, þys hijs my body." (505–10)²⁷

Shoreham follows up this disclosure of the transubstantiation formula with a remark on Christ's ability to perform such a miracle, which he roots in the divine voice's power: "He seyde to all the þe world, 'be' And al was ase he sede" (515–7). The *Southern Passion* does not include such commentary but merely records the formula in an account of the Last Supper: "Nymeþ and etep her-of, ffor myn owe fflesch hit is,/ Pat ffor 3ow worþ ysold, and supþe to deþe ydo" (842–3).²⁸ We also find a rendition of the formula in Robert Mannyng's *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*, which includes it in the third of four points on the activity of the Last Supper: "He blessed and made hys precyus body;/ To hys dycyplys he hyt 3aue, and seyde,/ Þis is my body for 3ow betrayed" (190–2).²⁹ It also appears in the *Cursor Mundi*, a widely-circulating account of the world divided into the seven stages of salvation history, which draws upon the synoptic gospel accounts in relating Christ's institution of the sacrament: "Takes and etes o þis bred,/ For fless þan es it min,/ þat sal þis ilk night be done/ For you to mikel pine" (15233–6).³⁰ As does the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Northern Passion* includes a simple record of Christ's words that closely resemble the liturgical formula: "Ethys, he said now of þis same brede/ It will yhow saue fra euill ded. It es my flessch þat I gow gif" (219–221).³¹

The *Northern Passion's* rendition of the transubstantiation formula is significant because, as Prosser points out, this text was a source for the N-Town play.³² So was Love's translation of the *Speculum Vite Christi*,³³ which includes not only the transubstantiation formula ("Takeþ & etep for sobely þis is my body þat sal be take & giuen for 3ow")³⁴ but also interesting commentary on it. Love immediately remarks that Christ gave the apostles and all priests "powere of þat consecracion"³⁵ in telling them to complete this performance "in commemoracion & mynde of me."³⁶ As the apostles received the sacrament with "drede & reuerence,"³⁷ so should every communicant appreciate the mystery "ouþere by trewe & deuout meditacion of his passion, or elles & þat more specially in the sacramentale etyng þerof."³⁸ He then remarks on the power of the transubstantiation formula, "[Þ]e which feiþ is þis in short wordes, þat þe sacrament of þe autere dewly made by vertue of cristes wordes is verrey goddus body in forme of brede, his verrey blode in forme of wyne."³⁹ He includes this comment in his exposition on the words' transformative ability, that the host "was not þat brede as it semede, & as it was before þe wordes of consecracion, nor wyne as it semede in self manere, bot onely þe likenes or

þe forme of brede & wyne contynnyng verrey cristes flesh & blode as it is seide.”⁴⁰ While it identifies the Eucharistic prayers as clerical discourse, this text also wants its audience not only to know the transubstantiation formula but also to understand the profound mysteries that underlie it.

These texts include the transubstantiation formula either in a conventional depiction of the Last Supper or in a fuller explanation of Eucharistic doctrine. Although these texts’ disclosures may suggest an impulse to make this formula more intelligible only to a literate audience, the *Memoriale Credencium* reveals a desire to educate all the laity—not just the literate—about it. This fourteenth-century text composed as part of Archbishop Peckham’s initiative includes the transubstantiation formula as part of the instruction that the priest is supposed to impart to his lay charges. In this way, the transubstantiation formula would reach not only the literate laity but also the uneducated folk. The text tells its audience “For þurgh þe vertu of goddes word þat þe prest saip. þis is my body: þe bred turnep into flesch.”⁴¹ This impetus to broadly publicize the transubstantiation formula in the vernacular is curious and perhaps idiosyncratic in light of the absence of sermons on relevant passages from the synoptic gospels in the *Speculum Sacerdotale* or Mirk’s homiliary. Instead, those texts explain the meaning of aspects of the Holy Thursday liturgy, such as the darkness of the church and the act of extinguishing the candles.⁴² The *Northern Homily Cycle* circumvents the issue of publicizing the transubstantiation formula by drawing upon John’s gospel, which does not include it. Thus, we get the sense that dissemination of the Canon’s words was not a universally agreed upon practice, especially when considering Archbishop Arundel’s constitution of 1408, which aimed to maintain the sanctity of clerical texts by mandating that they not be translated into the vernacular. Collectively, these texts that I have mentioned suggest a somewhat progressive desire to educate the audience about the silent transubstantiation formula, a purpose that we might also ascribe to the N-Town author’s publication of it.

We get a different sense—that the N-Town Christ-actor’s ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula was not borne of an orthodox mindset but rather subversive sympathies—from a heterodox source known as *Wyclif’s Wycket*. As Anne Hudson notes, while this text survives only in Reformation prints and is not mentioned by name until the late fifteenth century,⁴³ it outlines the Eucharistic doctrine that Wyclif had expounded in the 1380’s. *Wyclif’s Wycket* is a sermon that takes as its pericope “*Hoc est corpus meum*,” which the Wycliffite author locates not in the Canon but rather in synoptic gospel accounts of the Last Supper. He does so because in these scriptural texts one can discern that Christ did not intend by these words to create his body in the host. Christ’s utterance

of "*Hoc est corpus meum*" is figurative, an analogy that he meant to draw between the bread that he held in his hand and his body. On Christ's action, the author of *Wyclif's Wycket* argues thus: "for yf ye saye thys in my hande, and yf it be not a hande then am I a lyer."⁴⁴ The author means that Christ held only bread in his hands, which is thus all the Eucharist is. The Wycliffite author wishes to acknowledge the integrity of Christ's words and thus does not attribute to them meaning that, in his estimation, Christ did not intend. In light of Wyclif's purpose to challenge orthodox Eucharistic doctrine, we can surmise that the Wycliffite author meant his publication of the Latin transubstantiation formula to be a significant subversion of Eucharistic silence. Medieval texts such as N-Town Passion Play I that publish the Canon perhaps reflect the notion that publicizing the transubstantiation formula in English either to a learned or lewd audience was not so bad as disseminating the "original" Latin form. When we read the N-Town play's blatant public performance of the Eucharistic secrets as informed by the Lollard sermon, however, we may wonder if the playwright had a heterodox rather than an educational agenda.

If we ascribe to the N-Town playwright a subversive or even heterodox perspective, his intentions perhaps resemble those that underlie Martin Luther's 1525 publication of the Canon in the vernacular. Luther reveals his motives for doing so in his tract "The Abomination of the Secret Mass," in which he expresses wry appreciation for the damage control that silence has accomplished in its containment of untenable beliefs: "In short, God has wonderfully arranged it so that essentially the priest reads secretly the evil parts of the Mass which deal with sacrifice and works, and this is called the secret Mass. It is as if God were actually saying in this way that he wants to preserve his Christians from the secret Mass so that their ears might not hear such an abomination."⁴⁵ In saying how he is glad that silence has protected worshippers from the Canon's corruption, Luther (wittingly or not) speaks to the orthodox notion that silence was intended to keep the Canon secret in order to preserve it from the laity. Since Luther attested so grandiloquently to the Canon's depravity, it is somewhat curious that he proceeded to publish the Canon's text in 1525. To impress upon his audience members how despicable the Canon is and, by extension, the historic import of his publication of the Canon's dirty secrets, Luther tells them they need to cross themselves after reading it as they would when exorcising a demon. Although Luther's publication of the Canon's text seems at odds with his earlier comments about its fortuitous silence, it also speaks to his investment in popular involvement in religious devotion.

The Canon's publication and Luther's vituperative commentary on it found an audience in England, where it appeared in England in 1548 under

the title *The dysclosyng of the canon of ye poppysh Masse*.⁴⁶ Significantly, this publication of the Canon in England coincided with Thomas Cranmer's development of the Protestant liturgy, which appeared in the *First Prayer Book of 1549*. So we must wonder how this English disclosure of the already disclosed Canon reflects on the relevance of the transubstantiation formula's voiced recitation to the new English liturgy as well as to the N-Town play, whose manuscript was composed and revised in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and whose performances most likely continued after the Protestant Reformation as other cycles did. If Luther's prior influence on Cranmer's liturgy planning is significant, Cranmer had seen a reformed liturgy in Nuremburg during Lent 1532, a performance in which the Canon was recited out loud and in Latin. And in 1548, the year Luther's disclosure was published in England, Cranmer included as the last of nine points about his expectations for devotional reform an explicit statement regarding the Canon: "I think it convenient to use the vulgar tongue in the Mass, except in certain secret mysteries, whereof I doubt."⁴⁷ Presumably, his alternative to the "vulgar tongue" was either Latin—the language of the Canon in the 1532 liturgy he had seen in Nuremburg—or its conventional silence. Cranmer's initial impetus not to render the Canon in the vernacular is striking given that he did say a Mass entirely in English in September of that same year. We can only assume that he entertained the idea of retaining the sanctity of these "sacred mysteries" that Latin or silence could afford but the vernacular could not.

So why did Cranmer change his mind and translate the Canon into the "vulgar tongue"? Cranmer's reason for doing so becomes clearer when we consider the Lords' Debate on the Sacraments (1548), which addressed the silent Canon and why it would be so no longer.⁴⁸ Owing to "the diversity of opinions for the verity of the body and blood," the Canon would now be "spoken plainly in the Sacrament because of the doubtful understanding of the Region."⁴⁹ In citing the diverse and dubious understanding of the Eucharist, the Lords' Debate tellingly connects this doctrinal ambiguity with ritual silence, intimating a cause-and-effect relationship between the two terms. The Lords' Debate on the Sacraments thus suggests how the "diversity of opinions" about the Eucharist that divided the various reform groups themselves is in fact evidence of a discursive effect of the Eucharist's silent celebration. As the Lords' Debate of 1548 puts it, this Eucharistic confusion will be cleared up once the Canon was "spoken plainly." In fact, it soon would be by ministers who followed Edward's *First Prayer Book of 1549*, which directs them to recite the Canon "playnly and distinctly."⁵⁰

Fewer has remarked that critics have tended to read the N-Town plays as a "rather uncomplicated reformist satire."⁵¹ On the contrary, the

N-Town performance of the Last Supper play has quite a complicated relationship to religious orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and reform. Applying the logic of these Wycliffite and Protestant texts to N-Town's performance of the transubstantiation formula, we can see how it reflects on the "heterodox" impulse to demystify religious worship. Yet, the N-Town play's connection to these texts becomes vexed when we consider that it stages a scene that was at the heart of religious orthodoxy: the sacrament's institution. Was the playwright influenced by East Anglian Lollard irreverence for conventional Eucharistic beliefs and practices and thus flouted these secret rites on a public stage? The N-Town cycle is not known for its ribald revisions of scriptural stories that we see, for example, in York's Joseph's Trouble about Mary and Crucifixion plays. So we might assume that he was motivated by another regional influence: fervid lay-centered piety. So we might then ask about the play's relationship to other lay-centered medieval texts that simply wanted to teach doctrine in English, not subvert it. Although technically heterodox for their translation of scripture, a wide array of orthodox medieval texts, including Shoreham's *De sacramento altaris*, the *Southern Passion*, Mannyng's *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord*, the *Northern Passion*, the *Cursor Mundi*, the *Memoriale Credencium*, and Love's *Speculum* publish the transubstantiation formula. However, this medieval initiative to educate the laity via vernacular publication of the transubstantiation formula, while perhaps influenced by orthodox motives, itself suggests if not a crisis in the orthodox belief system then at least a tacit admission that Eucharistic doctrine needed edification, which, as the Lords' Debate on the Sacraments admitted, could not be attained in the conventional ritual's silent, Latin performance of the Last Supper. Thus, the "fyve wordes wipouten drede/þat no mon but a prest should rede"⁵² needed to be included in these educational texts. These texts thus contain a tacit critique not of Eucharistic doctrine but of its liturgical performance.

The N-Town play, however, is more subversive of traditional worship than these educational texts are, as it has a living actor portray the person of Christ and speak his sacred words, in imitation both of him and also of the priest at Mass. The playwright had the orthodox intention to educate his audience, an impulse that we see in many medieval lay-centered texts and that would become a hallmark of Protestant piety. Yet, for his time, he carried this intention out through highly unorthodox means, by performing the silent part of the Mass in great detail in English on a public stage, a phenomenon that we do not conventionally see in England until after the Reformation. Thus, in the playwright's desire to educate his audience and demystify the Eucharistic ritual, we can perceive his (most likely unwitting) proto-Protestant tendencies.

Elevation Prayers and the Voice's Use

In the N-Town Passion Play I, the transubstantiation formula is also ventriloquized by the angel that appears to Christ as he prays in Gethsemane: "Þis chalys ys þi blood, þis bred is þi body/ For mannys synne evyr offeryd xal be./ To þe Fadyr or Hefne þat is almyhty/ Þi dyscipulis and all presthood xal offere fore the" (28/61–4). The playwright clearly associates these words with the transubstantiation formula by having the angel address the institution of the sacrament, which will be offered by the disciples and all priests that take after them. As did the Christ-actor's recital of the transubstantiation formula in the Last Supper play, the angel's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula comes within a liturgical framework, which is established by the angel's appearance bearing the host and chalice, a convention that is found in iconographic depictions of the Agony in the Garden but not in other cycle plays, as Woolf notes.⁵³ In Towneley, a character called Trinitas appears to Christ; in York and Chester, the angel appears as in Luke's gospel yet does not bear the host and chalice. Unique to N-Town, this display of the sacrament shows the play's particular investment in dramatically representing its elevation at Mass, which thus cultivates a liturgical context for the angel's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula.

The host's elevation is also evoked in another verbal performance by the angel. The angel's recital of the transubstantiation formula is directly preceded by a meditation known as an elevation prayer, which the literate laity would have said right after the priest silently recited the transubstantiation formula and raised the host. The angel's initial words to Christ address him as lay worshippers would the host in their elevation prayers:

"Heyl, bothe God and man indeed,
 The Fadyr hath sent þe þis present.
 He bad þat þu xuldst not drede,
 But fulfylle his intent.
 As þe Parlement of Hefne hath ment
 Þat mannys sowle xal now redemyd be
 From hefne to herd, Lord, þu wore sent—
 Þat dede appendyth onto thee." (28/53–60)

In particular, this speech would have recalled elevation prayers because of its opening word, "Heyl," which, as Lauren Lepow notes, was a common anaphora in these prayers.⁵⁴

A prayer that includes this anaphora can be found in the *Speculum Christiani*, a fourteenth-century text that was one of the first books printed

in England (in 1478 and 1480) and of which there are many manuscripts. I include it here in full to illustrate how the repetition of “Hail” was an identifying feature of these prayers:

Hayle, most benigne Ihesu Cryste of Nazareth, borne kynge of Iues, son of the fader, maydens son, lombe of god, holy hooste, sacred verrey flesche, hele of the worlde, well of pyte! Pater Noster. Aue Maria.

Hayl, moste swere Ihesu Cryste of Nazareth, kynge of Iues, bryghtnes of the fader, prynce of pees, gate of heuen, brede of lyfe, maydens byrth, vessel of clenness! Pater noster, Aue Maria.

Hayl, most buxom Ihesu Criste of Nazareth, kynge of Iues, praysynge of angels, glorye, of seyntes, vision of pees, the hole godhead, verrey man, floure and frute of the moder mayden! Pater noster! Aue Maria.

Hayl, most mylde Ihesu Criste of Nazareth, kynge of Iues, light of heuen, price of the worlde, our ioye, brede of angels, myrth of herte, kynge and spouse of maydenhede! Pater noster. Aue Maria.

Hayle, moste of pite, moste meke of Ihesu Criste of Nazareth, kynge of Iues, wey of swetnes, hyste truth, oure mede, true charite, well of loue, peece and swetnes, our rest, lyfe euer-enduryng! Pater noster. Aue Maria. (1–21)⁵⁵

This prayer addresses Christ in his various aspects and thus implies how he can likewise be physically present in the transubstantiated host. A similar investment in addressing Christ’s presence in the host also underlies the elevation prayer recorded by John Lydgate, which likewise uses the anaphora “Hail”:

Hayle, holy Iesu our helthe oure goostly foode,
 Hayle, blyssed lord, here in forme of bred,
 Hayle, for mankind offryd on the roode,
 For oure Redempcion with they blood made reede,
 Stung to the hert with a speres heede;
 Now, gracyous Iesu, for thy woundys five,
 Graunt of thy mercy, to-forne or I be dede,
 Clene hosyll and schyft, whyle I am here alyue. (321–8)

This prayer associates the physical bread that the worshippers see before them with Christ’s sacrifice that invisibly inhabits it. This skillful insinuation of doctrine into an elevation prayer underlies a noteworthy body of elevation hymns that were authored by John Audelay:

Hayle! Bi glorious Godhede hit may not be sene,
 Hayle! With no freelte of flesly 3ene
 Hayle! I beleue truly in pis bred þat 3e bene,

Verey God and mon.
 Hayle! Of a maydyn 3e were borne
 To saue þi pepul þat was forlorne;
 A seche anoþer was neuer beforne
 In þi carnacion.⁵⁶

In a single verse, Audelay mentions not only the transubstantiation but also the virgin birth and the Incarnation. Another elevation prayer written in a similar style can be found in the Vernon manuscript. The first stanza begins with the synonym “Welcome” and then includes a series of five stanzas that start with “Heil.”⁵⁷ Others commence each verse with “Welcome,” such as the brief prayer included in the *Lay Folk’s Mass Book*: “Welcome, lord, in forme of brede/ For me thu tholedest a pyneful dede;/ As thu suffredest the coroune of thorne,/ Graunt me grace, lorde, I be nought lorne.”⁵⁸ In this elevation prayer, the lay audience is meant to recognize the sacramental transformation that the bread undergoes by the power of the transubstantiation formula that the priest has just spoken.

In the N-Town play, the angel’s recitation of an elevation prayer and then the transubstantiation formula conveys how these simultaneous liturgical performances represent the most precise point of contact between the lay worshippers’ devotions and the formal liturgy. While these prayers do not disclose the transubstantiation formula per se, they do resemble the priest’s prayers in their focus on Christ’s Passion, Eucharistic presence, and other sacred mysteries relevant to him. The N-Town angel’s version of an elevation prayer that is immediately followed by his ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula is meant to convey this conjunction between the literate lay person’s experience of the Mass and the priest’s performance of it. As I argued in [Chapter 5](#), although the laity did not officially have an important role in the liturgy, they could use their private, silent meditations in a way that rendered the Mass an arena in which they too could exert authority. In the case of the elevation prayers, this authority came from the fact that their prayers were similar in nature to those being recited by the priest while he consecrated the sacrament.⁵⁹

In addition to the angel’s prayer that was meant to simulate the literate lay worshippers’ recital of elevation hymns, the angel’s appearance displaying the host and chalice would have evoked in the N-Town audience the visually oriented experience of gazing upon the sacrament at Mass. The liturgical context in which this sacramental gazing took place sheds light on the devotional experience that the N-Town playwright wished to recall. The priest’s elevation of the host was a spectacle that clued lay worshippers into what was happening in silence at the altar, namely, that he had just spoken the transubstantiation formula. This element of

exposure reveals why Eucharistic gazing was so satisfying; it afforded lay worshippers scopophilic pleasure, which, as Laura Mulvey notes in her study of visual culture, stems from a desire to “make sure of the ‘private and forbidden,’” which is inherent to all gazing.⁶⁰ This phenomenon is especially relevant to the host’s elevation, which signaled the priest’s private recitation of the transubstantiation formula. The secrecy in which the host was consecrated was but one feature of an apparatus of secrets that served to characterize the elevated host as something “private and forbidden.” Occurring during the silent Canon, the elevation was itself surrounded by rood screens that were, in turn, punched with elevation squints for the benefit of a kneeling worshipper. Although a black cloth was sometimes held behind the elevated host to make it more visible, Eamon Duffy points out that black cloths draped around the entire altar during Lent served to conceal even the host’s elevation from view.⁶¹ This cooperation of secrecy and exposure speaks to a paradox that underlies the host’s elevation. It physically exposed something that cannot be seen, namely, Christ’s body, which medieval devotional texts frequently characterize as “hidden” in the Eucharistic bread. So, on the one hand, the elevation enlists the worshipper’s gaze only to subvert it. On the other, the elevation’s framing as an exposure of Christ’s body fosters an expectation that the spectator himself imaginatively accomplishes, be it in his or her vivid elevation prayers that speak of Christ’s Passion or actual Eucharistic visions in which he or she somehow manages to penetrate the elevated host to see what is hidden in it.

Close consideration of these Eucharistic visions offers further insight into the visually oriented liturgical experience that the N-Town playwright means to evoke in the angel’s display of the sacrament. Visions such as those recorded by Cæsarius of Heisterbach (ca. 1180–ca. 1240) revealed Christ’s suffering body or signs of it, such as blood issuing forth from the host.⁶² These visions ultimately speak to a desire for proof of Christ’s physical presence hidden in the host. N-Town’s *Betrayal* play discloses how each and every worshipper’s sacramental gaze was meant to visualize Christ’s suffering body in the host. By the time the angel appears with the sacrament, Christ has commented on his body’s disaggregation several times. On his way to Gethsemane with his apostles, Christ foretells his sacrificial death for human sin: “In peynys for hym my body schal schake,/ And for love of man, man xal dey” (28/15–16). Before leaving the apostles to pray, Christ confides to Peter, “My flesch qwakyth sore for fere and peyn” (28/20). When praying privately to God, Christ’s disclosure of his bodily suffering is the most graphic: “My fle-sche qwakyth in ferful case/ As þow þe joyntys asondre xuld schake” (28/43–4). Christ’s admission of physically quaking and shaking—activity

implied in Luke's brief mention of Christ's sweating blood while praying in Gethsemane—foreshadows his impending torture and crucifixion, the sacrifice emblemized in the angel's display of the sacrament (s.d. after 28/52). Given that Christ's disclosures of his physical agony immediately precede the angel's appearance with the chalice and host, the N-Town audience would receive Christ's account of his bodily suffering as firsthand validation of his Real Presence in the Eucharistic sacrament. Indeed, it is easy to imagine that the audience would even engage in a form of *imitatio Christi*, that is, sympathetic sharing in Christ's suffering, for the scene is very visceral. Furthermore, in this scene the N-Town audience would gaze on Christ's suffering body and the sacrament, thus beholding visual proof of Christ's Eucharistic presence while engaging in an auditory experience: the angel's recital of the transubstantiation prayer and the elevation prayer.

N-Town's Betrayal play dramatizes the lay worshippers' scopophilic fantasy of recognizing Christ's invisible Eucharistic presence in the host. Given the violence latent in this investigative gazing, it is no surprise how this orthodox devotional practice would be reworked in legends of heterodox Eucharistic testing, such as the one portrayed in Croxton's *Play of the Sacrament*. After the Jews acquire an unconsecrated host but before they begin their battery of tests on it, the Jew Jonathas ventriloquizes Christ's words that comprise part of the Canon's liturgical formula. The sequence of events in this mock Mass is telling. After the Jews lay the host on the altar, Jonathas remarks on the power of Christ's words as he recites his pseudo-Eucharistic prayer:

“On thes wordys ther law growndyd hath he
 That he seyde on Shere Thursday at hys sopere:
 He brake the brede and sayd *Accipite*,
 And gave hys dyscyplys them for to chere:
 And more he seyde to them there,
 Whyle they were all togethere and sum,
 Syttyng at the table soo clere,
Comedite Corpus meum.” (397–404)⁶³

In the Latin commands *Accipite* (“take”) and *Comedite Corpus meum* (“eat my body”), Jonathas evokes the wording of the secret liturgical prayers. This ventriloquial performance precedes the Jews' physical torture of the host and thus reflects on the elevation's purpose: to provide visual proof that the priest has spoken the transubstantiation formula and thus created Christ's Real Presence. Given that the bleeding host was a common motif in Eucharistic visions, the Jews' penetration of the host with a lance

that causes it to bleed suggests how the sacramental gaze itself inflicted a certain measure of violence on the elevated host. The Jews' torture of the host ultimately produces Christ himself, who thus guarantees not only his sacramental presence but also the efficacy of Jonathas's ventriloquism of the Eucharistic prayers. Comparing this ventriloquial performance with N-Town's draws into relief the transgressive element that underlies the angel's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula, the display of the host, and Christ's validation of the host's significance in his account of his physical suffering. Furthermore, when interpreted in light of the playwright's subversive methods, the N-Town staging of the host's elevation—the most famous and popular moment of the medieval Mass—inspires in its viewers a desire both to penetrate its ritual secrecy and also to adopt an impossible gaze with which to behold Christ's presence.

The angel's ventriloquial performance of the transubstantiation formula thus serves to cue us into the lay folk's dual experience of the sacrament: their own vocal performances (the elevation prayers) that accompany their visual devotion (to the elevated sacrament). This synthesis of vocal and visual sensory modes speaks to a discourse surrounding the performance of all biblical plays. The Lollard tract *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* critiques the audience's focus on visual spectacles involving Christ's body in alleging that "miraclis pleyyinge is of the lustis of the fleysse and mirthe of the body, no man may effectuely heeren hem and the voice of crist at onys, as the voys of Crist and the voice of the fleyshe ben of two contrarious lordis."⁶⁴ As the *Tretise* describes it, the audience's desire to gaze upon a spectacle will negatively impact their auditory sensibilities such that they cannot appreciate the Christ-actor's verbal performance. An attempt to remedy this distorted experience can be found in Chester's post-Reformation banns, which state that rather than having God appear on stage wearing a visor he instead should be portrayed as a voice in a cloud: "But sethence the face gilte doth disfigure the man yat deme A Clowdye coueringe of the man. a Voyce onlye to heare And not god in shape or person to appeare."⁶⁵ The logic underlying these critiques of biblical plays informs our understanding of the lay experience of the consecration. Despite the fact that the laity simultaneously engaged in viewing a public spectacle and uttering a private vocal performance, these texts suggest that we should regard these experiences not as cooperating but rather as competing.

The two sensory modes underlying the angel's performance are addressed in the N-Town Passion Play I's final scene, the Procession of Saints. In this performance, John the Baptist and all the apostles except Judas come onto a well-lit stage and are greeted by the Primus Doctor and Secundus Doctor with the word "Heyl." In this salutation, the N-Town playwright calls to mind the angel's earlier address to Christ and the popular elevation prayers

addressed to the host that frequently use the word “Heyl” and its variants. In this final processional scene, the anaphora “Heyl” thus evokes both the visual impulse that underlies sacramental gazing and also the private verbal performances that transpire during it. Penultimate in this procession is Thomas, whom the playwright tellingly identifies via his infamous desire to probe Christ’s body: “Heyl, Thomas, of whom þe gospel seyth/ In Crystys wounde was þoure refeccyon” (28/35–6). This graphic depiction of Thomas’s empirically-based faith calls to mind Christ’s tacit reference to it earlier in the Passion sequence. At the end of the Entry into Jerusalem play, Christ’s curing of a blind man affords him the chance to commend the faith of his future followers who will not have the benefit of the personal contact with him that could promote visually based belief: “Blyssyd be all þo þat beleve on me/ And se me not with here bodyly eyen” (26/480–1). This familiar scriptural passage actually does not pertain to this particular episode but rather is Christ’s comment on Thomas’s need to probe his wounds to believe that he had been resurrected. Thus, the play’s portrait of Thomas deriving refreshment from Christ’s wounds in the Procession of Saints reads as a critique of visually oriented, affective devotion, which fosters the sort of fleshly pleasure from gazing on Christ’s body that was condemned by the author of the Lollard *Tretise*.

Immediately following Thomas in this procession is John the Baptist, who has appeared earlier in the play when he delivered his prologue after Satan’s. The significance of the *Secundus Doctor*’s address to John and thus the entire Passion play is evident in light of the play’s opening speech by Satan, who brags about his plans to overthrow Christ and boasts about the appearance of his own splendid outfit: “Byholde þe dyvercyte of my dysgysyd varyauns” (26/65). The Passion Play I thus begins with a demonic spectacle that piques the audience’s scopophilic sensibilities and ends with a valorization of the voice, apparent in the play’s ultimate lines in which the doctor addresses John the Baptist:

“Heyl, Johan Baptyst, most sovereyn creature
That evyr was born be naturall conseyyng
And hyst of prophetys, as wytnesseth Scuryture;
Heyl, [v]oys þat in desert was allwey cryeing.” (28/37–40)

Given that John’s prologue has immediately followed Satan’s at the play’s start, we should read this final address to him as a response not only to Satan’s initial monologue but also to the issues in the play that it raises. While evoking John’s evangelism and ascetic lifestyle that are hallmarks of the clerical vocation, this image of the voice crying in the desert also pertains to the lay devotional experience alluded to in the play’s elevation

prayer, which is evident in the playwright's inclusion of the word "Heyl" in his address to John. By ending the Passion sequence with this line, the N-Town playwright disposes his audience to a certain type of sensory devotional experience, namely, the act of engaging in private vocal performances rather than viewing the public spectacle of the elevated host. For this, the N-Town playwright encourages his audience toward what would become a Reformed take on the liturgy, that is, valorizing an oral/aural devotional experience over an iconocentric one.⁶⁶ The N-Town playwright does not go so far as to valorize the Word and preaching over the Eucharistic sacrament. His text is, after all, a product of the late fifteenth century, which saw great devotion to the sacrament. What he does is check the difference between iconocentric worship of the Eucharist and preaching the Word by encouraging his audience to appreciate the oral dimension of their devotion to the Eucharist.

The audience's experience of the liturgy, a critically noted hallmark of the N-Town plays, can be seen in the Christ-actor's and angel's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula. In the case of the Christ-actor's performance, the playwright means to educate his audience about liturgical secrets, an impulse that underlies the wealth of orthodox texts that publicize the transubstantiation formula. The play also discloses, however, an impetus found in proto-Protestant and Protestant texts that publish the transubstantiation formula. Although we cannot know the precise intentions of the N-Town playwright, we can talk about what we do know, his text, which reveals a desire to subvert the Canon's traditional silent performance as proto-Protestant and Protestant writers would. Although it would be a stretch to ascribe heterodox leanings to an anonymous playwright, it is perhaps better to say that the Christ-actor's performance of the transubstantiation formula reveals a subconsciously proto-Protestant take on worship in his desire to demystify it, even if it means portraying the Eucharistic secrets on a public stage.

Another proto-Protestant impulse emerges in the angel's performance. The angel's ventriloquism of the transubstantiation formula is accompanied by his recitation of an elevation prayer as well as the display of a host and chalice. These two activities suggest both the verbal performance and also the visual spectacle that the lay worshipper experienced at Mass. The N-Town Passion Play I ultimately impresses on its audience the value of their own verbal performances, evident in its conclusion that evokes the format of liturgical elevation prayers. For this, the playwright makes a drastic turn. He himself has staged the angel's appearance with the sacrament, an iconocentric and popular moment in the Mass. He then directs his audience to recognize the import of the verbal dimension of the Mass, evident in his ending the play with a scene that is not spectacular but rather mimics the format of elevation prayers.

CONCLUSION

RESOUNDING VOICES

As a field of inquiry, ventriloquism allows us to examine manifold and even disparate types of vocal performances: reading, pagan oracular revelations, preaching, confession, the liturgy, and biblical plays. All of these performances have one important thing in common: the divine voice's mediation through human organs, in which we see a Christian resignification of ventriloquism's traditional pagan meaning. In the devotional scenes implied in the texts that this book studies, the ventriloquized divine voice functions as a conceit for human relationships with the divine as well as mundane relationships between clerical speakers and lay audiences. This book tracks a line of inquiry that begins with a perfect, fantastic view of the voice's ventriloquism purveying divine presence and power, then examines the ironic lability of the clerical voice as it became identified as an organ for sacred speech, and culminates in a study of texts that represent not only lay ventriloquism of the clerical voice but also uniquely lay performances capable of divine communications. Scholars of medieval literature have studied verbal performances for the agency that they connote but, with some exceptions, have been less attentive to how the voice was used in actual performance scenes. This book corrects for this oversight by exploring the divine voice's mediation in actual devotional contexts and its imagined effect on real medieval people.

A focus on ventriloquism also challenges the critical commonplace of associating Protestant worship with listening and medieval piety with seeing. I myself invoked this trope in [Chapter 6](#), when I suggested that the playwright of the N-Town Passion Play I was encouraging his audience to engage less in iconocentric worship and more in an aural/oral devotional experience that would become a hallmark of Protestant piety. Although medieval worship was iconocentric, we should not overlook the various ways that medieval worshippers listened to the voice, the

divine voice in particular: when they read the Bible or heard it read; when they listened to sermons; in liturgical silence, when they engaged in privy prayers to God; in dramatic performances, when the actors ventriloquized Christ's words. God is often described as speaking in silence, for example, as he did when addressing Elijah on Mount Horeb. Yes, he spoke in silence yet also audibly during various medieval devotional performances, where his human subjects did nothing less than broker in divine power by using their voices to communicate with him.

The sixteenth century is often understood as the era of religious revolution, a revolution that brought about a break with an allegedly uniform and unquestioned medieval devotion. My book shows that this was not the case, that there was an evolution of religious understanding that occurred in the Middle Ages, a change that we can chart by observing how medieval subjects produced and heard the divine voice. The radical religious changes in the sixteenth century, which many think of as a revolution, were in fact prepared for by a more subtle and less violent process of evolution during the preceding centuries. Anxiety over pious expression was not solely the domain of the Reformation. Medieval subjects likewise acutely experienced the difficulties of worshipping an absent God, present only in his voice. Initiatives were undertaken during the Middle Ages to make popular piety a more aural/oral experience by improving preaching and confession. Medieval subjects, however, knew that the priest's voice could be corrupt, a notion that fostered not only an anxiety about its authority but also a means by which to challenge that authority during the Protestant Reformation. Lay worshippers realized that they could be active participants in a largely silent Mass, changes to which would come with the reformed Lord's Supper. In listening to the divine voice throughout the Middle Ages, we observe increasing cynicism over the clergy's capacity to produce it. Yet, we are also witness to the power of the laity to utter sacred speech and communicate with God.

Although my study has limited itself to implied clerical ventriloquial performances so I could examine the power relations that transpired between God, the clergy, and the laity, the notion of ventriloquism could be usefully extended to other medieval texts. Mystical revelations, for instance, in which the religious person acts as a medium for the divine voice, would be a fruitful field of inquiry. This would include the *Shewings* of Julian of Norwich and even the hysterical sobbings of Margery Kempe. Saints lives would also be fertile ground for further study, as these stories are filled with examples of persons who served as the designated organs for the divine voice. One might even make a study of talking objects that do not produce a divine voice to see how this modern form of entertainment

had its roots in the Middle Ages. One text that comes to mind in this tradition is “Le Chevalier qui fist parler les cons” (“The Knight who Made Cunts Speak”), which features speech through a nonoral organ as do several of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. In light of ventriloquism’s original association with divine speech (albeit pagan), it would be interesting to see if religious nuances inform secular, bawdy examples.

Even though this study addresses texts that were written, in some cases, over a thousand years ago, it raises issues about the divine voice that remain relevant today. I live in the Bible Belt, which is populated with Protestant churches that preach how God’s Word is literally contained in the Bible. In scriptural readings in such churches, worshippers are captive audiences for the divine voice. Some churches even believe in speaking in tongues, a heteroglossic form of expression that allegedly has a divine source. To an outsider, these performances seem naïve and even bizarre. But for the believer, they offer a clear channel for the divine voice.

In perhaps a more relevant vein, we can see plenty of postmodern interest in the medieval Mass, such as in the stagings of it in York in the new millennium. This interest in an arcane performance is not solely that of historians but also contemporary Catholics. Pope Benedict XVI is trying to popularize the Tridentine Latin Mass that was created at the Council of Trent (1545–63). This Mass is the closest thing we have to a medieval Mass outside of historical reconstructions, as it includes this performance’s characteristic Latin and silent Canon. I myself have attended several Tridentine Masses, with an eye to understanding what the medieval people might have done while the priest recited the Canon in silence with his back to them. Did they really listen to the voice of God? On my medieval anthropological mission, I did not observe any “jangling.” I did see some worshippers praying the rosary. Many of them read prayer books, including a modern day missal that includes the entire Mass (including the silent part) in English and Latin. For this, these worshippers are different than their medieval ancestors, whose books contained prayers they should say during the silent Canon but not the priest’s prayers themselves. But, as I demonstrated in [Chapter 6](#), literate and even unlearned medieval subjects would have had some knowledge of the priest’s prayers, as numerous vernacular language texts recounted Christ’s words spoken at the Last Supper. Although the post-Vatican II Mass might seem like a lay-centered improvement, we should consider what it lacks. Recited in English and without the silent Canon, the modern Mass seemed to the noted mythologist Joseph Campbell (d. 1987) like a “Julia Child cooking show,” with the priest narrating what he did—blow by blow—as he prepared the Eucharistic feast.¹ Although

recent interest on the part of the Vatican in the Tridentine Mass may be viewed as part of a larger orthodox agenda, it also represents an attempt to return to what Campbell identified as the mysteriousness of the Latin language commensurate to the sacred mysteries that it conveyed and the sacred silence of God's voice, which medieval subjects routinely heard.

NOTES

Introduction: Listen Up!

1. On the *pythia*, see Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, 47–75.
2. John Chrysostomos, *The Homilies of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 398–9, qtd. in Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 70.
3. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 397, qtd. in Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 70.
4. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 105.
5. 1 Samuel 28:19. All Vulgate quotations are from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam*, 5th ed., (Matriti, 1977). All Latin translations are mine.
6. The Jewish commentator is Pseudo-Philo. The Christian commentators are Pionius, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, John Chrysostomos, Tertullian, Eustathius of Antioch, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, and Pseudo-Augustine.
7. 1 Samuel 28:7.
8. K. A. D. Smelik, “The Witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis Until 800 A. D.,” *Vigiliae Christianiae* 33 (1977): 160–79, 164–5.
9. Smelik, “The Witch of Endor,” 164–5.
10. Luke 23:43.
11. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 84.
12. Jeremiah 23:13.
13. Jeremiah 23:16.
14. Jeremiah 23:31.
15. Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker*, 172.
16. I’ve only come across two recent scholars who note the silence of the Canon. T. P. Dolan, “The Mass as Performance Text,” in *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, 13–24, 18; and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 117. Both authors mention the Canon’s silence in passing and do not explore its implications for the lay-clerical power dynamic as I do. While I recognize that churches may have had

- idiosyncratic practices, I base my argument about the silent Canon on the Sarum Rite established in the late 11th century, which, as Josef Jungmann points out, influenced the liturgy throughout England and even on the continent.
17. At various other points in the Mass, the Sarum missal directs the priest to pronounce the prayers "*tacita voce*" or "*submissa voce*." The Canon was the longest and most sacred silence.
 18. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 179.
 19. Don Inde, *Listening and the Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound*, 14.
 20. *Ibid.*, 3.
 21. Jacques Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word*, 64.
 22. Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History*, 16.
 23. Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. and intro. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, 178.
 24. Johann Amman Conrad, *The Talking Deaf Man*, (1692), qtd. in Rée, *I See a Voice*, 64. Important to note is the fact that not all deaf educators held that the deaf needed to speak, only the "oralists."
 25. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 93.
 26. On the silent Canon, see Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982); Adrian Fortescue, *The Mass: A Study of the Roman Liturgy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912); Josef Andreas Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols. (New York: Benzinger, 1951-5); Carlos A. Lewis, "The Silent Recitation of the Canon of the Mass," diss. *Pontificae Universitatis Gregorianae*, 1962; and Geoffrey G. Willis, "The Roman Canon of the Mass at the End of the Sixth Century," *Downside Review* 98: (1980) 124-37.
 27. Lewis, "The Silent Recitation of the Canon of the Mass," 62-3. Lewis points out that in addition to the Canon's mystical secrecy, a more practical reason for its silent recital might have been to accommodate multiple Masses said at the same time in a large church; the first Mass would be begun and said aloud through the *Sanctus* and then in a low voice while the second Mass was started at the next altar (82-3). Another pragmatic cause for the practice may have been the difficulty entailed in singing aloud in a large church all of the 12 prayers that comprise the Canon (56).
 28. This fact is also cited by Thomas Frederick Simmons, introduction, in *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, xviii.
 29. Fortescue, *The Mass*, 325.
 30. Willis, "The Roman Canon," 124. Willis thus argues that the Canon was said aloud in Gregory's time (125).
 31. *Ibid.*, 124.
 32. Mary M. Schaefer, "Twelfth-century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: Christological and Ecclesiological Dimensions," Ph. D. Diss, University of Notre Dame, 1983, 202, 205, 321.

33. *The Golden Legend as Englished by William Caxton*, vol. 7, 239.
34. Jesse Shieldflower, "The Mavens' Word of the Day," accessed 18 November 2010, <<http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19991007>>.
35. William Durandus, *Rationale divinorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and T. M. Thibodeau, lines 24–26, at 1:414. The Latin text reads: "*Secreta dicitur quasi nobis occulta, quia humana ratio nequaquam plenarie tantum misterium capere potest, ad quod significandum merito secreta uoce celebratur.*" The Latin translation is mine.
36. William Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, Lib. 1, Tit. 10.
37. Thomas Frederick Simmons, introduction, *The Lay Folks Mass Book*, xx.
38. *Councils and Synods*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, vol. 2. The statute reads, "*Precipimus quoque ut in qualibet ecclesia canon missae sit rite correctus,*" 274.
39. These include statues from Archbishop Stephen Langton for the diocese of Canterbury, Bishop Richard Poore for the diocese of Salisbury, Bishop Walter de Cantilupe for the diocese of Worcester. *Councils and Synods*, 29, 79, and 299.
40. This stipulation is found in the Council of Oxford, Bishop William de Blois's direction for the diocese of Worcester, the *Constitutiones cuiusdam episcopi*, and the synodal statutes of Bishop Robert Bingham for the diocese of Salisbury. *Councils and Synods*, 109, 177, 186, and 377.
41. *Councils and Synods*, 641.
42. Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96.
43. John Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, 89.
44. Wyclif, *De Eucharistia*, 90.
45. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 14.
46. Rick Altman, ed., *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*; Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*; Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past*; and Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. Michael Bull and Les Black, eds., *The Auditory Culture Reader*, includes a few essays on pre-technological era soundscapes. A noteworthy example of a scholarly work that examines the voice in a pre-technological context is Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-factor*.
47. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*; Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*; Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart*; and Christopher A. Jones, "The Book of the Liturgy in Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 659–702.
48. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, argues that "[e]very item of liturgical evidence we possess from the Anglo-Saxon church without exception reveals the use of the Roman rite, either in the form of the

- Greg. [Gregorian] sacramentaries brought by S. Augustine, or in copies of the Frankish 'Gel. [Gelasian] of the 8th century' introduced across the channel later on" (577).
49. Although the *Andreas*-manuscript dates from the late tenth century, the date of the poem's composition (based on linguistic evidence) is the mid to late ninth century. On dating the poem, see Robert Boenig, *Saint and Hero: Andreas and Medieval Doctrine*, 23; *Andreas and the Fate of the Apostles*, ed. Kenneth R. Brooks, xxii; Robert Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter*, 61, 315, 390.
 50. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, esp. 160–5.
 51. Alcuin Blamires, "The Wife of Bath and Lollardy," *Medium Aevum* 58 (1989): 224–42; Alan J. Fletcher, "Chaucer the Heretic," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 25 (2003): 53–122; Frances McCormack, *Chaucer and the Culture of Dissent: The Lollard Context and Subtext of the Parson's Tale*; and Alastair J. Minnis, with V. J. Scattergood and Jeremy J. Smith, *The Shorter Poems*, 122–3.
 52. Fletcher, "Chaucer the Heretic," 56.
 53. Martin Luther, "The Abomination of the Secret Mass," in *Luther's Works*, trans. Abdel Ross Wentz, 36: 503–25.

1 The Talking Dead

1. Unless designated otherwise, the text of the Old English riddles comes from *The Exeter Book*, ed. G. P. Krapp and E. van K. Dobbie, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 3. All translations from the Old English are mine.
2. Andy Orchard, "Enigma Variations: the Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Tradition," in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols., 1: 284–30, 284.
3. John D. Niles, *Old English Enigmatic Poems and the Play of the Texts*, 2–3.
4. Orchard, "Enigma Variations," points out that this convention of interpellating the audience is seldom found in the Anglo-Latin *ænigmata* that circulated among learned Anglo-Saxons. The solutions to the *ænigmata* accompanied them (286).
5. Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, discusses *scriptorium* riddles as they reflect on Anglo-Saxon literacy, esp. 97–125; Lawrence K. Shook, "Riddles Relating to the Anglo-Saxon *Scriptorium*," in *Essays in Honour of Anton Charles Pegis*, ed. J. Reginald O'Donnell, 215–236, treats *scriptorium* riddles, their various solutions, translations, and sources.
6. On this paradigm, see Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans., notes, and intro. by Barbara Johnson, famously observed that writing has been featured in Western culture as the "deadly *pharmakon*," an agent that functions as both a remedy and poison (61–173).

8. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 1982: "[A] literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people," 12.
9. Craig Williamson, ed., *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle Songs*, 193.
10. Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures*, 193.
11. John D. Niles, "Toward an Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetics," in *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*, ed. John Miles Foley, 359–77, draws upon a wealth of works that examine textual production in oral cultures. Seeking to delineate a "poetics of the Old English oral style," he lays out criteria for evaluating the oral influences on Old English texts. Although he focuses more on the "orality" of Anglo-Saxon literature, he does not regard oral and written modes as mutually exclusive. Niles admits the coexistence of oral and written traditions on authors like the *Beowulf*-poet (365).
12. Roberta Frank, "The Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993), 11–36, 15.
13. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe. *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*.
14. Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 4; Frank, "Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet," critiques Niles' view that literary depictions of oral performances, such as scop reciting poems for a courtly audience, are accurate historical representations: "This is like saying that Walt Disney's animated cartoons were made for an audience of mice and ducks" (29).
15. Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France*, 11.
16. Glorie, Fr., ed., *Variae collectiones aenigmatum merovingicae aetatis; pars altera*, *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 133, 172.
17. Latin translations are Glorie's unless indicated otherwise.
18. *Variae collectiones aenigmatum merovingicae aetatis*, 242. *Edere* is from *edico*, and thus, has its roots in speaking. I changed the translation of *edere verba* from "to bear words" to "to proclaim" to convey the word's oral nuances suggested by the word "voice."
19. I have changed the translation of "*milibus*" from "millions" to "thousands."
20. This definitive phrase ("*quasi mundum animal ruminando*") comes from Bede's account in *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* of Cædmon's miraculous songs, produced by hearing and digesting written texts, a practice that lent a literate influence to his spontaneous oral performances. On the origins and use of this image to describe subaudial reading, see Philip J. West, "Rumination in Bede's Account of Cædmon," *Monastic Studies* 12 (1976): 217–226.
21. See Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext*, especially "Prologue: Silence Speaking Words," 1–34, where he explains what he calls the practice of "phonemic reading."
22. Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition*.
23. On memorial composition, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*.

24. Various solutions to this riddle include *ballista*, an oven, a fortress, a forge, and a quiver. Marijane Osborn, "Anglo-Saxon Tame Bees: Some Evidence for Beekeeping from Riddles and Charms," *Neophilologisches Mitteilungen* 107 (2006): 271–83, offers "beehive" as a solution, saying that the "protector" is a human or a fort of some kind (277). Their terrible spears (4, *sperebrogan*) would be the bees' stingers. Shook, "Riddles Relating to the Anglo-Saxon Scriptorium," argues for "inkwell," saying that the poem's military references should be taken metaphorically (222). Additional evidence for Shook's solution can be found in the other inkhorn riddles (#87, #92), which describe ink coming from their bellies as this inkhorn (#17) does weaponry.
25. On how the act of reading engages the reader's vocal organs, see Stewart, *Reading Voices*, 11.
26. On the ancient origins of ventriloquism, see Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*; and Valentine Vox, *I Can See Your Lips Moving*.
27. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 70.
28. Thomas Alva Edison, *The Diary and Sundry Observations of Thomas Alva Edison*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes, 205–9. This invention is discussed in some detail in Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, 214–5.
29. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 114. Bloom refers to the gramophone (1878), Charles Cros's invention that followed closely after Edison's of the phonograph (1877).
30. On the relationship between these two phenomena, see Steven Connor, "A Gramophone in Every Grave," in *Dumbstruck*, 362–93.
31. Isidore of Seville and John of Salisbury, qtd. in Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 169.
32. Richard of Bury, *The Philobiblon*, intro. Archer Taylor, 16.
33. Charles Cros, qtd. in Charles Grivel, "The Phonograph's Horned Mouth," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, in Douglas Kahn and Gregory Whitehead, ed., *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio and the Avant-Garde*, 41.
34. Joyce, *Ulysses*, 114.
35. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, 14.
36. On the liturgy as the primary context for scriptural reading, see Marie Anne Mayeski, "Reading the Word in a Eucharistic Context: The Shape and Methods of Early Medieval Exegesis," *Medieval Liturgy: A Book of Essays*, 61–84.
37. *The Vercelli Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 2.
38. Barbara Raw, "The Cross in *The Dream of the Rood*: Martyr, Patron and Image of Christ," *Leeds Studies in English* 38: 1–15, 4.
39. Thomas D. Hill, "The Cross as Symbolic Body: An Anglo-Latin Analogue to *The Dream of the Rood*," *Neophilologus* (77) 1993: 297–301.
40. John Chrysostomos, *The Homilies of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* [no tr. named], 398–9, qtd. in Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 70.

41. On the particular issue of the voice's technological mimicry, see Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, esp. "The Talking Machine," 193–211, and "His Master's Voice," 212–36.
42. Jeremiah 23:16: "Haec dicit Dominus: "exercituum nolite audire verba prophetarum qui prophetant vobis et decipiunt vos visionem cordis sui loquuntur non de ore Domini.'" All Vulgate quotations are from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam*, 5th ed., (Matriti, 1977).
43. Matthew 18:20: "Ubi enim sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi in medio sum."
44. *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, EETS os 300, 196.
45. Hugh Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites: Food and Drink and Their Consumption in Old English and Related Literature*, esp. "The Spiritual Food of the Eucharist and of Divine Teaching" (159–70).
46. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Vernon J. Bourke, Fathers of the Church, vol. 21, 96.
47. The stomach's role in the reader's assimilation of the text is evident in the ruminative model. Medieval commentaries on reading also posit the heart as the seat of memory. See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 44–9, and Eric Jager, "The Book of the Heart: Reading and Writing the Medieval Subject," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 1–26.
48. See Mark Amsler, "Affective Literacy: Gestures of Reading in the Later Middle Ages," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 18: 83–110, esp. 85; Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, esp. 44–8.
49. Augustine, qtd. in Steven Roger Fischer, *A History of Reading*, 89.
50. Williamson, *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book*, 313.
51. James J. Megivern, *Concomitance and Communion: A Study in Eucharistic Doctrine and Practice*, 241.
52. Christopher A. Jones. "The Book of the Liturgy in Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 659–702.
53. For lines 11–12, I have used the edition found in *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, vol. 1, ed. Bernard J. Muir (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), 326–27. Krapp and Dobbie render these lines: "dryhten dolgdon . . . / swa þæs beages benne cwædon." Inclusion of the word "don" ("to do") makes more sense in context.
54. Nicholas Howe, "The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England," *Old English Literature*, ed. R. M. Liuzza, 1–22, 6.
55. On Ælfric's knowledge of and position on this Eucharistic debate, see Robert Boenig, "Andreas, the Eucharist, and Vercelli," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 79 (1980): 313–9; Lynne Grundy, "Ælfric's *Sermo de Sacrificio* in Die Pascae," *Notes and Queries* 235 (1990): 265–9; Theodore H. Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Sermo de Sacrificio* in Die Pascae: Anglican Polemic in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century," *Anglo-Saxon Scholarship: The First Three Centuries*; and Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites*, 161–2.
56. Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies, Second Series: Text*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 5, 154.

57. On the difference between performers who produce engastrimythic voices (i.e., “inner”) versus “outer” ones that seem to come from a different external source, see Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 214.
58. On the sexual content of some of the riddles, see Nina Rulon-Miller, “Sexual Humor and Fettered Desire in *Exeter Book* Riddle 12,” *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, 99–126; D. K. Smith “Humor in Hiding: Laughter Between the Sheets in the *Exeter Book* Riddles,” *Humour in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. Wilcox, 79–98.

2 Christ’s Lips Move

1. All citations from *Andreas* are taken from *The Vercelli Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 2. All translations from the Old English are mine.
2. Robert Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals: Translations from the Greek, Latin, and Old English*, trans. Robert Boenig, 95.
3. Edward B. Irving, “A Reading of *Andreas*: the Poem as Poem,” *Anglo Saxon England*, 12 (1983): 215–38, 224.
4. Dabney Bankert, “The Poetics of Religious Conversion in Medieval English Literature,” 67, 86.
5. See the Blickling homilist’s account in *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century*, ed. R. Morris. Perhaps to account for the fact that Matthew is still able to speak, the Blickling homilist has him refuse to take the draught.
6. Christopher Fee, “Productive Destruction: Torture, Text and the Body in the Old English *Andreas*,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 11 (1994): 51–62, 53.
7. Seth Lerer, *Literacy and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 53.
8. Robert Boenig, *Saint as Hero: Andreas and Medieval Doctrine*, 73; and David Hamilton, “The Diet and Digestion of Allegory in *Andreas*,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972), 150.
9. John Casteen, “*Andreas*: Mermedonian Cannibalism and Figural Narrative,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 75 (1974) 74–8, 77.
10. Alexandra Bolintineanu, “The Land of Mermedonia in the Old English *Andreas*,” *Neophilologus* 93 (2009): 149–64, 161–2.
11. Irving, “A Reading of *Andreas*,” lists works that treat *Andreas* as greatly indebted to or that are “feeble imitation[s] of *Beowulf*” (215); Leonard J. Peters, “The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*,” *PMLA* 66 (1951), 844–63, argues that direct influence of *Beowulf* on *Andreas* cannot be proven.
12. Bolintineanu, “The Land of Mermedonia,” 154.
13. *Recensio Casanatensis*, in *Cathedra Petri: neue Untersuchungen über die Anfänge der Primatslehre*, ed. Hugo Koch (Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann in Gießen, 1930), 32–95, 39–41. Translations from the Latin throughout are adapted from Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew in the Country of the Cannibals*.

14. Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*, 30. Boenig's translation of *Praxeis* renders Christ's warning as, "Obey the one who made you, the one able to say the word and that city would be taken away from there with all the people in it; for I command the horns of the winds, and they could blow it away" (3). All translations from the Greek throughout are Boenig's.
15. Boenig, *Saint as Hero*, 65.
16. Irving, "A Reading of *Andreas*," 224.
17. *Recensio Casanatensis*, 67.
18. Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*, 41.
19. Valentine Vox, *I Can See Your Lips Moving: The History and Art of Ventriloquism*, 16.
20. Valentine Vox, *I Can See Your Lips Moving*, 12–3.
21. *The Old English Lives of Saint Margaret*, ed. Mary Clayton and Hugh Magennis, 112.
22. *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 1: 398.
23. Audrey L. Meaney, "Ælfric's Use of His Sources in His Homily on Auguries," *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, 66 (1985): 477–495, 491.
24. *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 1: 372–4.
25. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 58.
26. *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 1: 374.
27. *Ibid.*, 4: 325.
28. This phenomenon speaks to Steven Connor's contention that the voice has an embodying power; it can conjure a body even if only in the listener's imagination. On the vocalic body, Connor writes: "Voices are produced by bodies; but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea—which can take the form of a dream, fantasy, ideal, theological doctrine, or hallucination—of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice. . . . The leading characteristic of the voice-body is to be a body-in-invention, an impossible, imaginary body in the course of being found and formed" (35–6).
29. James W. Earl, "The Typological Structure of *Andreas*," in John D. Niles, ed., *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, 66–89, 73.
30. Shannon N. Godlove, "Bodies as Borders: Cannibalism and Conversion in the Old English *Andreas*," *Studies in Philology* 106 (2009): 137–60, 148–9.
31. *Recensio Casanatensis*, 57.
32. Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*, 37–8.
33. *Ibid.*, 38.
34. *Ibid.*, 8.
35. J. D. Ray, "Ancient Egypt," in *Oracles and Divination*, ed. Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker, 174–190. Tuthmosis IV, for example, fell asleep in front of the Sphinx and had dream conversations with it (180).
36. *Recensio Casanatensis*, 58–9.
37. Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*, 38–9.

38. Irving, "A Reading of *Andreas*," points out: "Andreas' rôle is to imitate and in a sense to substitute for Christ" (228).
39. Frederick M. Biggs, "The Passion of Andreas: *Andreas* 1398-1491," *Studies in Philology* 85 (1988): 413-27, 419.
40. Mark 15:34. In the Vulgate, it reads, "Deus meus Deus meus ut quid dereliquisti me?" All Vulgate quotations are taken from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam*, 5th ed. (Matriti), 1977.
41. Luke 23:46. "Pater in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum."
42. The fact that "cyðan" has decidedly oral connotations (proclaim, utter, tell) supports reading the stone's "testimony" as a speech act.
43. Thomas D. Hill, "Figural Narrative in *Andreas*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969): 261-273, 265-7; and Marie Michelle Walsh, "The Baptismal Flood in the Old English *Andreas*: Liturgical and Typological Depths," *Traditio* 33 (1977): 137-58.
44. Boenig, *The Acts of Andrew*, 20.
45. *The Blickling Homilies*, 249.
46. *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, 196.
47. Penn R. Szittyá, "The Living Stone and the Patriarchs: Typological Imagery in *Andreas*, lines 706-810," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 72 (1973): 167-74, 172-3.
48. *The Vercelli Book*, 92.
49. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 11.
50. Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—a Philosophical History*, 16.
51. Aristotle, *De anima*, trans. and intro. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred, 176-79.
52. *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, ed. R. Morris, 181.
53. Ann Brown Ross, "Anglo-Saxon Teaching on the Soul," discusses the dialogues between soul and body. The soul usually addresses the mute body. Sometimes the body is voiceful, but, interestingly, it never addresses the soul (166).
54. *Old English Homilies*, 183.
55. *The Exeter Book*, 31.
56. *The Exeter Book*, 41.
57. *The Vercelli Book*, 101.

3 The Master's Voice

1. On the priest's role as God's proxy in confession, see Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, 1: 149.
2. C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, 85.
3. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, esp. 160-5.
4. John W. O'Malley, "Introduction," in *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas L. Amost, Eugene A. Green, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle, 2.
5. Stephen Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, 5.

6. Mary Clayton, "Homilies and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England," *Peritia* 4 (1985): 207–42, repr. in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, 151–198, 177.
7. Jonathan Wilcox, "The Audience of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and the Face of Cotton Caligula A.XIV, Fols. 93–130," in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. A. N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf, ACMRS, 241–2.
8. Malcolm Godden, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS ss 18, xxi–xxix.
9. Kenneth Sisam, "MSS Bodley 340 and 342: Ælfric's Catholic Homilies." *Review of English Studies* 7 (1931): 7–22, 8 (1932): 51–68, 9 (1933): 1–12, repr. in *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (1953), 1998. 148–98, 164.
10. On "talk" permitted during monastic silence, see David Knowles, *Monastic Orders in England: A History of its Development from Saint Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 940–1216*, esp. 453–6.
11. Godden, ed. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 430.
12. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, Second Series: Text*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 5, lines 177–8. All Old English translations are mine.
13. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, Second Series*, 97, lines 181 and 182 respectively.
14. Connor, 12.
15. Wilcox, "The Audience of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," 242.
16. Christopher Jones, "Ælfric and the Limits of 'Benedictine Reform,'" in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Mary Swann and Hugh Magennis, esp. 91–3.
17. Knowles, *Monastic Orders in England*, 595.
18. Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1000–1066*, 2nd ed., 334.
19. Wilcox, "The Audience of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," 242.
20. The full Latin text reads: "Fractus longa molestia stomachus diu me charitati vestræ de lectionis evangelicæ expositione loqui prohibuit. Vox namque ipsa a clamoris virtute succumbit; et quia a multis audiri non valeo, loqui, fateor, inter multos erubesco. Sed hanc in me verecundiam et ipse reprehendo. Quid enim? Nunquid si multis prodesse nequo, nec paucis curabo? Et si ex messe portare manipulos multos non possum, nunquidnam debeo ad aream vacuus redire? Quamvis enim quantos debeo ferre non valeo, certe vel paucos, certe vel duos, certe vel unum feram." *Sancti Gregorii Papæi, Cognomeno Magni, Opera Omnia*, ed. J. P. Migne, *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, vol. 76, 1,174.
21. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, ed. John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, 8.
22. Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-factor*, 9, 51.
23. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, 189.
24. Brad Bedingfield, "Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002): 223–55, 234.

25. Allen J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, 6.
26. Lynne Grundy, *Books and Graces: Ælfric's Theology*, 197.
27. *Councils and Synods, with other documents relating to the English Church*, ed. D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke. vol. 1, 1: 202.
28. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance*, 142.
29. On the difficulty in describing and identifying public penance, see Bedingfield, "Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England," 223–55.
30. Bedingfield, "Public Penance," 238.
31. Grundy, *Books and Graces*, 197.
32. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, First Series: Text*, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS ss 17, 458. This translation is Bedingfield's, "Public Penance in Anglo-Saxon England," 238.
33. Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, writes that Dunstan influenced King Edgar to recommend the observance of the continental custom of confession mortal sins on Ash Wednesday (1:194).
34. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, First Series*, 258.
35. Aaron J. Kleist, *Striving with Grace: Views of Free Will in Anglo-Saxon England*, 179.
36. *Ibid.*, 260–1.
37. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 265.
38. For the manuscript history of Gregory's original text and Alfred's method of translating it, see Richard W. Clement, "King Alfred and the Latin Manuscripts of Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 6 (1985): 1–13. On Alfred's role as translator and his constituent authority, see Kathleen Davis, "The Performance of Translation Theory in King Alfred's National Literary Program," in *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays on Literary and Cultural Transmission in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*, ed. Robert Boenig and Kathleen Davis, 149–170. On Alfred's way of translating from Gregory's Latin, see William H. Brown, Jr. "Method and Style in the Old English *Pastoral Care*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 68 (1969): 666–84.
39. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. Henry Sweet, EETS os 45, 50, 271. "Manian" means "admonish" but in order to instruct. Old English text taken from the Hatton MS.
40. Allen J. Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 35.
41. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, 270–2.
42. *King Alfred's Pastoral Care*, 272.
43. The cooperation of the priest with God in forgiving sins is a complicated matter. In the early church, sinners confessed to God in public at the liturgy before taking the Eucharist. As the act of confession became more sacerdotal, the priest's exact role had to be defined. Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) sums up the current position in arguing that although God alone can in fact forgive sins, he enlists the cooperation of confessors (Lea, 1. 149).
44. *Ibid.*, 272–4.

45. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, 46.
46. Allen J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, 152.
47. Malcolm Godden, "Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," in *The Old English Homily and its Backgrounds*, ed. and intro. by Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard Huppé, 99–118, 102.
48. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. Malcolm Godden, EETS ss 18, 638.
49. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction*, 638.
50. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, Second Series: Text*, ed. Godden, 305–6.
51. *Ibid. Text*, 308.
52. *Ibid.*, 149. See also *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, First Series*, which includes Ælfric's claim that: "Circlice þeawas forbeodað to secganne ænig spell on ðam ðrim swigdagum" ("Church customs forbid saying any homily on the three silent days"), 298.
53. See Roberta Frank, "A Note on Old English *Swigdagas*," *Studies in Honor of René Derolez*, ed. A. M. Simon-Vanderbergen, 180–9, 185.
54. Joyce Hill, "Ælfric's Silent Days," *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 118–31, 122.
55. For Godden's discussion of *swigdagas* as a monastic convention, see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, 118–9. Christopher Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks at Eynsham*, suggests that this annotator was "very likely St. Wulfstan's chancellor and biographer, Coleman" (186).
56. Joyce Hill, "Ælfric's Silent Days," 121.
57. *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, ed. R. Morris, EETS os 53, 103.
58. *Old English Homilies of the Twelfth Century*, 103.
59. *Ibid.*, 103.
60. *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, 88.
61. *Ibid.*, 89.
62. *Ibid.*, 89–90.
63. Exodus 28:34–5. "Ita ut tintinnabulum sit aureum et malum punicum: rursumque tintinnabulum aliud aureum et malum punicum. Et vestietur ea Aaron in officio ministerii, ut audiat sonitus quando ingreditur et egreditur sanctuarium in conspectus Domini et non moriatur." The Vulgate is taken from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam*, 5th ed., (Matriti, 1977).
64. *King Alfred's Pastoral Care*, 90–2.
65. *Ibid.*, 92.
66. Altman, "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism," *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 67–79, 74.
67. On modern technology's depersonalization of the voice, see Patrick J. O'Donnell, "His Master's Voice: on William Gaddis' *JR*," *Postmodern Culture* vol. 1 no. 2 (1991), accessed 20 July 2008, <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/contents.all.html>>.

68. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. by Hannah Arendt, 217–51.
69. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, 12.
70. Michael Taussig, "His Master's Voice," in *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, 212–36. He gives his explanation of why the dog came to be known as the "talking dog": "To refer to this as 'the talking dog' is not only to reverse the talking machine from a player into a recorder, or to see the dog as entering into a conversation with the player, but also to magically endow—with effortless ease—the hound with human faculties of the talking machine. It would seem that this transformation of the animal into the human, however, can only come from the machine itself, the machinery of sound-mimesis. The setting up of the contrast between (the then new) technology and the animal, between the machine and the primitive, has the curious result of moving the primitive into the machine to wrest the mimetic faculty from a bunch of wires and grooves" (225).
71. *Councils and Synods*, 1: 209.
72. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, explains how *s'entendre parler* entails a "splitting" of the self that is produced in the voice: "There would be no self to split unless the self were already at least in principle distinguishable in terms of what it says, and what it hears, and or imagines it hears itself saying. To say that we produce ourselves in voice is to say that we stage in our voice the very distinction between speaking and hearing which provides the setting in which the voice can resound" (6).
73. Connor discusses the feeling of alienation that arises when one hears one's own recorded voice. This misrecognition, however, is not a desire to disown one's voice, but rather a "surfeit of pleasure involved in taking one's voice as one's own." Drawing upon ancient dramatic conventions, Connor describes the voice as a "persona, a mask, a sounding screen" (5). Even in everyday, modern "performances," the voice implies the *persona* that produces it and is produced by it by "mov[ing] [the speaker] into the world" (7).
74. Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History*, describes how language acquisition and its constituent acculturation evokes a whole host of Western epistemological binaries: "Young children adjusting their instinctive babbling to the forms of their first human language provide an obvious and inescapable model for a distinction between spontaneity and training, nature and convention, instinct and culture. And from there it is only a small step to the idea that the human voice is divided against itself: riven by a gap between the animal and the spiritual, the narcissistic and the echoic" (72).
75. In his discussion of how the reproduced voice provided an immortality of sorts, Connor, *Dumbstruck*, goes so far as to suggest that the phonograph looks like a coffin (386).

76. On modern expectations for the voice's "mastery," see Patrick J. O'Donnell, "His Master's Voice: on William Gaddis' *JR*,"
77. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England*, 5.
78. Gatch, 14–5.
79. Jonathan Wilcox, "Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care," in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti, 53–62, 60.
80. Godden, "Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition," 99.
81. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England*, 13.
82. *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, EETS os 160, 76, lines 6–12.
83. *Homilies of Ælfric: a Supplementary Collection*, ed. John C. Pope, EETS os 260, 793.
84. Luke 23:43.
85. *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 794.

4 Cursed Speakers

1. For critical discussions of the cursing scenes at the tale's end, see Alcuin Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*; Mary Carruthers, "Letter and Gloss in the Friar's and Summoner's Tales," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 2 (1972): 208–214; Mary F. Godfrey, "Only Words: Cursing and the Authority of Language in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 10 (1998): 307–28; Britton J. Harwood, "Chaucer on 'Speche': *The House of Fame, The Friar's Tale* and *The Summoner's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 26 (1992): 343–49; Daniel T. Kline, "'Myne by right': Oath Making and Intent in *The Friar's Tale*," *Philological Quarterly* 77 (1998): 271–93; V. A. Kolve, "'Man in the Middle': Art and Religion in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 12 (1990): 3–46; Robert Myles, *Chaucerian Realism*; Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition*; and David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy*.
2. William Kamowski, "The Sinner against the Scoundrels: The Ills of Doctrine and 'Shrift' in the Wife of Bath's, Friar's and Summoner's Narratives," *Religion and Literature* 25 (1993): 1–18, argues that the Wife's *Tale* illuminates clerical abuses, particularly in the sacrament of confession (8).
3. Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, 1: 149.
4. Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, 21.
5. Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 21.
6. V. A. Kolve, "Man in the Middle," discusses possible sources and analogues for Chaucer's tale. The earliest version is found in Cæsarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–c.1240) and ends with the devil's caution not to take seriously what people say when they are angry. Johannes Herolt (d. 1468), a Dominican friar at Basel, tells the same story. The version closest to

- Chaucer's is recounted by the English Benedictine Robert Rypon, who was writing around the year 1400. This account features a farmer with oxen pulling a plow, similar to Chaucer's carter with a team of horses pulling a cart (14).
7. H. Marshall Leicester Jr., "'No Vilenys Word': Social Context and Performance in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 17 (1982): 21–39, 25.
 8. Clarence H. Miller, "The Devil's Bows and Arrows: Another Clue to the Identity of the Yeoman in Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 30 (1995): 211–4, 212.
 9. Gail Ivy Berlin, "Speaking to the Devil: A New Context for the *Friar's Tale*," *Philological Quarterly* 69 (1990): 1–12, 2.
 10. Berlin, "Speaking to the Devil," 6.
 11. Leicester, "'No Vilenys Word,'" 27.
 12. D. W. Robertson Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, 268.
 13. Jean E. Jost, "Ambiguous Brotherhood in the *Friar's Tale* and *Summoner's Tale*," in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Peter G. Beidler, 77–90, 84.
 14. For this sense of "subtilitas," see Thomas Aquinas, in Harry C. Marsh, "Cosmic Structure and the knowledge of God: Thomas Aquinas' *In librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio*," 486–504.
 15. *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, ed. Walter Waddington Shirley, 117.
 16. Leicester, "No Vilenys Word," 28.
 17. 1 Samuel 28:7. All scripture quotations are taken from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam*, 5th ed. On scriptural commentaries are taken the Witch of Endor's ventriloquial speech, see Stephen Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, esp. 75–101; and Klaus A. D. Smelik, "The Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian exegesis until 800 A. D.," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 160–79.
 18. On the minstrel's social role in medieval England, see John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*.
 19. As David Raybin, "The Death of a Silent Woman: Voice and Power in Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 95 (1996): 19–37, points out, Chaucer borrowed the story from sources, but he adds the wife's silence (25). As Raybin notes, in Ovid's version of the tale, Phebus kills his wife only to discover she was pregnant with his son, a detail Chaucer tellingly omits. If one reads *The Manciple's Tale* as concerned foremost with the voice's workings, the wife's pregnancy connotes a form of speech, oracular belly-speech that discloses haunting secrets and, by extension, would have detracted from Chaucer's overstated depiction of her as silent.
 20. Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker*, 163.
 21. Mary M. Schaefer, "Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: the Relationship of the Priest to Christ and to the People," *Studia liturgica* 15 (1982–1983): 76–86.

22. *Memoriale Credencium: A Late Middle English Manual of Theology for Lay People*, ed. J. H. L. Kengen, 173.
23. See Joseph E. Grennen, "The Canon's Yeoman's Alchemical 'Mass,'" *Studies in Philology* 62 (1965): 546–60.
24. Cæsarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans. H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, 2 vols., 2: 162.
25. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, 70.
26. Bruce Holsinger, "Pedagogy, Violence, and the Subject of Music: Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* and the Ideologies of 'Song'" in *New Medieval Literatures*, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton, 157–92.
27. Lee Patterson, "The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption: Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31: 507–560, 508–510.
28. *Ibid.*, 515.
29. Patterson tracks medieval responses to *kiddush ha-Shem*, relevant to medieval Judaism in light of forced conversions that Jews faced. In some cultural contexts, ritual slaughter became an alternative to their rejecting religious beliefs.
30. John Wyclif, *Select English Works*, ed. Thomas Arnold, vol. 3, 228.
31. John Wyclif, *The English Works of Wyclif*, ed. F. D. Matthew, EETS os 72: "þan were matynys & Masse & euen song, placebo & dirige & comendacion & matynes of oure lady ordeyned of synful men, to be songen wiþ heije crynge to lette men from þe sentence & vnderstondynge of þat þat was þus songen, & to maken men wery & vndisposid to studie goddis lawe for akyng of hedis: & of schort tyme þanne weren more veyn iapis founden; deschaunt, countre note & orgon & smale brekyng, þat stiriþ veyn men to daunsynge more þan to mornynge, & here-fore ben many proude & lecherous lorelis founden & dowid wiþ temperal & worldly lordschipis & gret cost. but þes foolis schulden drede þe scharpe wordis of austyn, þat seiþ: as oft as þe song likiþ me more þan doþ þe sentence þat is songen, so oft I confess þat I synne greuously" (191).
32. John Thoresby, *The Lay Folk's Catechism*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons and Henry Edward Nolloth, EETS os 118, 7.
33. Dyan Elliott, "True Presence/False Christ: The Antinomies of Embodiment in Medieval Spirituality," *Mediaeval Studies* 64: 241–65, 259.
34. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn, 217–51.
35. *The Golden Legend as Englished by William Caxton*, vol. 7, 239.
36. *A Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, in *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons, EETS os 71, 147, lines 674–5.
37. Grennen, "The Canon's Yeoman's Alchemical 'Mass,'" 550.
38. Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 95.
39. Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Mass," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., vol 33., pt. 2 (1972): 407–19, 418.

40. Hudson, "A Lollard Mass," 418. The Preface and the Sanctus directly precede the Canon, the 12 prayers recited in silence. The record notes that Ramsbury recited the Preface aloud ("*publice lecta*") and then remained silent until the elevation ("*usque ad Leuaciounem*"), at which point he continued to remain silent yet elevated the bread and wine, an odd gesture in light of Lollard opinions about orthodoxy's tolerance for idolatry.
41. Cæsarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, 133.
42. See *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS os 217, 1942, 62, lines 27–30; and John Mirk, *Mirk's Festial*, ed. Theodore Erbe, EETS es 96, 113.
43. *Middle English Sermons*, ed. Woodburn O. Ross, EETS os 209, 99.
44. *Mirk's Festial*, ed. Theodore Erbe, EETS es 96, 169.
45. Kline, "Myne by Right," 284. Kline speaks further to the veracity of the carter's oath: "Civil law solved the dilemma of evaluating intent by judging actions rather than intention, and oath making, whether in wager of law or another form, established a criterion for judging intent. In essence, a simple statement of intent is inadequate for judgment; the intent must be confirmed materially through writing, action, or interrogation by acting upon the vow, summoning a defense, or failing to provide proof, for a properly sworn and repeated oath proved the intent of the defendant. The diabolical yeoman is therefore more lawyer than theologian when he instructs the summoner to inquire after the carter's intent himself (1557) and corrects the summoner's mistaken assumption about the carter's pledge of goods: "'Nay,' quod the devel... / 'It is nat his entente, trust me weel' (1555–6). Although the carter's subjective will is not available for examination, his language is, and his repeated and then ruptured vow proves his intention not to divest himself of his cart and team" (284).
46. Linda Tarte Holley, "The Function of Language in Three Canterbury Churchmen," *Parergon* 28 (1980): 36–44, invokes Augustinian ideas on language, particularly the potential rift between words and their meaning, in discussion the Pardoner's, Friar's, and Summoner's narratives.
47. Carruthers, "Letter and Gloss," 209.
48. *Ibid.*, 210.
49. Harwood, "Chaucer on 'Speche,'" 348.
50. Kolve, "Man in the Middle," 15.
51. *A Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 140, lines 441–5.
52. *Ibid.*, 139, lines 396, 398.
53. Godfrey, "Only Words," 323.
54. Kolve, "Man in the Middle," 35.
55. Myles, *Chaucerian Realism*, 115.
56. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, 144.
57. Godfrey, "Only Words," 321.
58. Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*, 193.
59. *Ibid.*, 195.

60. Sheila Delany, "Doer of the Word: The Epistle of St. James as a Source for Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 17 (1983): 250–4, points out that a possible source for the mother's speech is the Epistle of St. James.
61. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 204.
62. On the relevance of these concerns to the voice, see Stephen Connor, "The Decomposing Voice of Postmodern Music," *New Literary History* 32 (2001): 467–83; and Michael Taussig, "His Master's Voice," in *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, 212–36.
63. Luke 23:43: "et dixit illi Iesus amen dico tibi hodie mecum eris in paradiso."
64. On Chaucer's depiction of the controversy over vernacular translations as they entailed a loss of clerical prerogative, see Fiona Somerset, "'As just as is a squyre': the Politics of 'Lewed Translacion' in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 187–207.
65. A convenient edition of Arundel's Constitutions can be found in the transcription made by Katherine Zieman, "Chancellor Archbishop Arundel," accessed 20 July 2008, <<http://www.umilta.net/arundel.html>>.
66. Fiona Somerset, "'As just as is a squyre,'" 198.
67. Blamires, *Chaucer, Ethics, and Gender*, 189.
68. Robert A. Pratt, ed., *The Tales of Canterbury*, xx, likewise notes an echo of Christ's words to the Good Thief (Luke 23:43) in these words to the summoner but does not note the devil's scriptural appropriation of Christ's words in 1 Samuel.
69. See Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 75–101.

5 Belly Speech

1. For a succinct account of how criticism of the tale has changed over the last 30 years, see John Finlayson, "Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*: Flatulence, Blasphemy, and the Emperor's New Clothes," *Studies in Philology* 104 (2007): 455–70, esp. 455–7.
2. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. Nelson Francis, EETS os 217, 46.
3. See Valerie Allen[not on biblio], *On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages*, 75; Roy Peter Clark, "Doubting Thomas in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 11 (1976): 164–78; Clark, "Wit and Witsunday in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Annuaire Mediaevale* 17 (1976): 48–57; John V. Fleming, "Anticlerical Satire as Theological Essay: Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Thalia* 6 (1983): 5–22; Alan Levitan, "The Parody of Pentecost in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 40 (1971): 236–46; Bernard S. Levy, "Biblical Parody in *The Summoner's Tale*," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966): 45–60; Glending Olson, "The End of *The Summoner's Tale* and the Uses of Pentecost," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 209–45; and Penn R. Szittyá, "The Friar as False Apostle: Antifraternal Exegesis and *The Summoner's Tale*," *Studies in Philology* 71 (1974): 19–46.

4. V. A. Kolve, "Chaucer's Wheel of False Religion: Theology and Obscenity in 'The Summoner's Tale,'" in *The Centre and Its Compass: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor John Leyerle*, 265–96, 295, reads this unforgettable image *vis-à-vis* various medieval representations of the Madonna of Mercy, which portray the Virgin Mary spreading open her gown to show the faithful taking refuge there. Fleming, "Anticlerical Satire," also mentions this image in connection with the opening of *The Summoner's Tale* (11).
5. Martha Bayless, *The Devil in the Latrine: Sin and Material Corruption in Medieval Culture* (book in progress).
6. In its portrait of flattery, *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 58, lines 23–30, reflects this degradation of the mouth's function in its pun on "tailes" and "tales": "þe fife synne is whan flateres defendeþ and excuseþ and heleþ þe vices and synnes of hem þat þey wol flater; þerfore þei beþ cleped in holy writ 'tayles,' for þei beþ the tailyes þat helen þe foule synnes and foule dedes of þe grete maistres and riche men, and al is for wordly good; and þerfore þei beþ wel likned to foxes tailyes for here hauylones and sleȝtes and wrechednesses." A close rendition of this passage appears in another text derived from the *Somme le Roi*, *Dan Michel's Aȝenbite of Inwit* or, *Remorse of Conscience*, 61.
7. Stephen Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, 105. Chaucer's awareness of "ventriloquism" as the early church Fathers understood the term is apparent in the famous moment in *The Miller's Tale* when Nicholas responds to Absolon's sweet love songs by farting in his face. His ventriloquial "answer" to Absolon evokes the divination through pagan oracles in the preceding *The Knight's Tale*.
8. Josef Andreas Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, 1:131.
9. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, 1:130.
10. Carlos A. Lewis, "The Silent Recitation of the Canon of the Mass," 83. Lewis's work is helpful for its exhaustive discussion of reasons behind the Canon's silent recitation. See "When and Why Was the Silent Recital Introduced?," 35–83. He discusses the contributing factors on which I focus, namely, the establishment of clerical authority, reverence for the sanctity of sacred mysteries, and the desire to preserve liturgical formula from corruption. He also includes many other considerations, such as the Latin language's gradual fall into desuetude as a "vernacular" tongue and emulation of the Eastern practice of enclosing the altar with a *tetravela*.
11. H. Ansgar Kelly, "Sacraments, Sacramentals, and Lay Piety in Chaucer's England," *Chaucer Review* 28 (1993): 5–25, notes that "hali-bread" distributed after Mass served as a substitute for the Eucharist (8).
12. For example, see Mary Carruthers, "Letter and Gloss in the *Friar's* and *Summoner's Tales*," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 2 (1972): 208–214; Martha H. Fleming, "'Glosynge is a glorious thing, certeyn': A Reconsideration of *The Summoner's Tale*," *The Late Middle Ages, Acta* 8 (1981): 89–101; and

- Jill Mann, "Anger and 'Glosynge' in *The Canterbury Tales*," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 76 (1990): 203–223.
13. See Phillipians 3:18–9; *The Pardoner's Tale* (6. 521–33).
 14. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 47, lines 24–9.
 15. On the drinkers' and gluttons' Masses, see Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: the Latin Tradition*, 93–128.
 16. James Andreas, "'Newe Science' from 'Olde Bokes': a Bakhtinian Approach to *The Summoner's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 25 (1990): 138–151, 147.
 17. William Durandus, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, ed. A. Davril and T. M. Thibodeau, 3 vols., 1: 243: "Sane olim templum erat in duas partes, interposito velo divisum; pars prior vocabatur sancta, interior vero sancta sanctorum. Quicquid ergo in officio misse ante secretam agitur, quasi in ede priori est; quod autem in secreta agitur, intra sancta sanctorum est" (4, 1, 13, lines 100–104). The Latin translation is mine.
 18. On Chaucer's interest in pagan ventriloquial practices, see A. J. Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, esp. "'Goddess spoken in amphibologies': The Ambiguous Oracle," 135–43.
 19. Robert A. Koch, "Elijah the Prophet, Founder of the Carmelite Order," *Speculum* 4 (1959): 547–60, argues that the significance of divine speech in Elijah's showdown with the Baal prophets is manifest in the so-called *Biblia Pauperum*, a late twelfth-century scriptural survey for poor preachers that was widely used by friars. A late fifteenth-century version included woodcuts, one of which depicted Elijah's contest with the Baal prophets alongside a rendition of Pentecost, when the apostles received the gift of tongues.
 20. See 1 Kings 19:12. On God's revelations to Moses and Elijah as they relate to *The Summoner's Tale*, see Ian Lancashire, "Moses, Elijah and the Back Parts of God: Satiric Scatology in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Mosaic* 14 (1981): 17–30.
 21. Marie P. Hamilton, "The Summoner's 'Psalm of David,'" *Modern Language Notes* 57 (1942): 655–57, points out that the Ellsmere text says "But" (656). Its alternative, "Buf," speaks to the nuances of the text.
 22. Psalm 44:2. The Latin translation is mine.
 23. C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, 90.
 24. John Thoresby, *The Lay Folk's Catechism*, 43.
 25. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 233–34.
 26. *Fasciculus Morum*, ed. and trans. by Siegfried Wenzel, 61.
 27. *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, ed. John Henry Blunt, 330.
 28. *The Lay Folk's Mass Book* illuminates the performance of the Our Father: "he wil saie with hegh steuen/ pater-noster to god of heuen;/ herken him with gode wille,/ and whils he saies, hold þe stille, bot answere at temptacionem/ set libera nos a malo, amen," 46, lines 484–9. The author then includes the text of the Our Father in English for the people to recite silently while the priest says the Pater Noster out loud.

29. Hamilton, "The Summoner's 'Psalm of Davit,'" 657.
30. This legend appears in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, 45; and the *South English Legendary*, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS os 87, 585.
31. Valentine Vox, *I Can See Your Lips Moving: the History and Art of Ventriloquism*, 12.
32. *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. Edward H. Weatherly, 252. On the moral degeneracy ascribed to minstrels, see John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*.
33. Johannes of Hildesheim, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, ed. Carl Horstmann, 110, lines 29–30.
34. Hildesheim, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, 110, lines 30–34.
35. On Thomas's legend and its relevance to *The Summoner's Tale*, see Clark, "Doubting Thomas in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," 164–78. Clark notes the visceral language, especially the word "grope," that is used in medieval texts to describe Thomas's inspection of Christ's wound.
36. On the sexual nuances of this groping between Thomas and the friar, see Catherine S. Cox, "'Grope wel bihynde': The Subversive Erotics of Chaucer's Summoner," *Exemplaria* 7 (1995): 145–77. R. D. Eaton, "More 'Groping' in *The Summoner's Tale*," *Neophilologus* 88 (2004): 615–21, argues contra Cox that "grope" was in fact the word normally used to describe the confessor's interrogation of a person's conscience.
37. See Edwin D. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, esp. "Restraining the Deviant Speaker: Chaucer's Manciple and Parson," 187–230; Fleming, "Glosynge," 89–101; and Mann, "Anger and 'Glosynge' in *The Canterbury Tales*," 203–23.
38. On the various nuances of *placebo* that inform Friar John's use of it, see John Fleming, "Chaucer's 'Syngeth Placebo,' and the 'Roman de Fauvel,'" *Notes and Queries* 210 (1965): 17–18.
39. The friar's placating performance speaks to Michel Foucault's notion of silence as a strategy, an unspoken element that inhabits explicit discourse. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, 27.
40. See Levitan, "The Parody of Pentecost," 236–46; and Szittyá, "The Friar as False Apostle," 19–46.
41. Readings of *The Summoner's Tale* as a Pentecostal parody include: Allen, *On Farting*, 75; Clark, "Wit and Whitsunday," 48–57; Fleming, "Anticlerical Satire as Theological Essay," 5–22; Levitan, "The Parody of Pentecost," 236–46; Levy, "Biblical Parody," 45–60; Olson, "End," 209–45; and Szittyá, "The Friar as False Apostle," 19–46.
42. Peter Travis, "Thirteen Ways of Listening to a Fart," *Exemplaria* 16 (2004): 323–48.
43. For example, see *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, 26, lines 279–80. Tellingly, the text's reference to these "priuey prayers" frames them in terms of lay worshippers' exclusion from knowing them (i.e., their inclusion in the priest's "boke").

44. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, in *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed. Simmons, 128–47, at 132, lines 156–60; *Memoriale Credencium: A Late Middle English Manual of Theology for Lay People*, ed. J. H. L. Kengen, 175; and *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. Weatherly, 11.
45. On Chaucer's sustained interest in *pryvetee*, see Joseph L. Baird, "The Devil's *Privetee*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 70 (1969): 104–106; Robert Boenig, *Chaucer and the Mystics: The Canterbury Tales and the Genre of Devotional Prose*; and Robert Hanning, "Telling the Private Parts," in *The Idea of Medieval Literature: New Essays on Chaucer and Medieval Culture in Honor of Donald R. Howard*, ed. James M. Dean and Christian Zacher, 108–25.
46. Boenig, *Chaucer and the Mystics*, 14.
47. For the *Cloud*-author's frequent use of the words *hyd* and *privy* to describe the divine, see *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson.
48. Durandus, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, 4, 35, 2, lines 24–26, at 1:414. The Latin text reads: "Secreta dicitur quasi nobis occulta, quia humana ratio nequaquam plenarie tantum misterium capere potest, ad quod significandum merito secreta uoce celebratur." The Latin translation is mine.
49. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, in *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed. Simmons, 128–47, at 132, lines 156–60.
50. Simmons, ed., *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, introduction, xxvii.
51. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 138, line 373.
52. *The Thirde Order of Seynt Franceys, for the Brethren and Sisters of the Order of Penitents*, ed. Walter W. Seton, EETS os 148, 53.
53. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 138, line 373.
54. *Ibid.*, 138, lines 381–2.
55. Simmons, ed., *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, introduction, xiii.
56. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 139, lines 393–400.
57. *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, 16, lines 11–5.
58. Cæsarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, 2:133.
59. *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, 4, lines 29–30.
60. *Ibid.*, 28, lines 312–13.
61. Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity*, 13.
62. *Lay Folk's Catechism*, 43; *Myroure of Oure Ladye*, 330.
63. For instance, *The Book of Vices and Virtues* warns worshippers who just "mouen here lippes" that God will turn "a def eere" to their prayers and reserve his attention for "þe biddynge þat comēþ from a depe herte" (233–34).
64. Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, ed. Anna Granville Hatcher, 49.
65. Kathleen M. Oliver, "Singing Bread, Manna, and the Clergeon's 'Greyne,'" *Chaucer Review* 31 (1997): 357–64.

66. On this Augustinian notion of speech, see Margaret W. Ferguson, "Saint Augustine's Region of Unlikeness: The Crossing of Exile and Language," *Georgia Review* 29 (1975): 842–64; Cynthia Hahn, "Speaking Without Tongues: The Martyr Romanus and Augustine's Theory of Language," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell, 161–180; and Joseph Anthony Mazzeo, "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962): 175–96.
67. Fiona Somerset, "'As just as is a squyre: The Politics of 'Lewed Translacion' in Chaucer's *Summoner's Tale*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999): 187–207, writes that "[t]he vernacular eruption with which Thomas responds to this speech rudely shatters the friar's model of clerical superiority" (204). Whereas I argue for the valorization of lay speech as a perverse oral performance that can ironically ventriloquize the silent Canon's prayers, Somerset contends that the fart is a type of "lewed" speech that subverts the friar's clerical performance.
68. For example, *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, 28, lines 312–3; and *A Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 138, line 373.
69. For example, *The miroure of mans salvacionne: A Middle English translation of Speculum humanae salvationis*, ed. Avril Henry, pairs woodcuts depicting Pentecost and the destruction of the tower of Babel (174).
70. J. Stephen Russell, "Song and the Ineffable in *The Prioress' Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 33 (1998): 176–89.
71. Somerset, "'As just as is a squyre,'" 187–207, 206.
72. On the wheel's use to amplify sounds, see Britton J. Harwood, "Chaucer on 'Speche': *House of Fame*, the *Friar's Tale*, and the *Summoner's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 26 (1992): 343–49.
73. Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy*, uses a Foucaultian framework to explain how secrecy works to structure knowledge: "Secrecy is thus not so much a matter of secrets as it is a manner of rhetoric, and its power lies less in what is kept hidden than in the dynamic between the 'knows' and the 'know-nots'" (93).
74. On this performance, see Anne Hudson, "A Lollard Mass," *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., vol. XXXIII, pt. 2 (1972): 407–19.
75. On this direction for the Canon's recitation, see *Councils and Synods*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney, 109, 177, 186, 377.
76. John Wyclif, *Select English Works*, ed. Thomas Arnold, vol. 3, 405.
77. Critics who invoke religious iconography to explain the wheel image include: V. A. Kolve, "Chaucer's Wheel of False Religion: Theology and Obscenity in 'The Summoner's Tale,'" in *The Centre and Its Compass: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honor of Professor John Leyerle*, 265–296; Levitan, "The Parody of Pentecost," 236–46; Levy, "Biblical Parody," 45–60; Phillip Pulsiano, "The Twelve-Spoked Wheel of the *Summoner's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 29 (1995): 382–89; and Szittyá, "The Friar as False Apostle," 19–46.
78. Levitan, "The Parody of Pentecost," 236–46.

79. *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. Weatherly, 11.
80. *The Northern Passion*, ed. Frances A. Foster, 31.
81. Jeremiah 23:28: "Propheta qui habet somnium, Narret somnium; Et qui habet sermonem meum, Loquatur sermonem meum vere. Quid paleis ad triticum?"
82. Somerset, "'As just as is a squyre,'" 207.

6 Playing the Prophet

1. The name of the town in which it was being performed would be inserted in the opening banns; the "N" in "N-Town" stands for "nomen."
2. Stephen Spector, *The N-Town Play*, EETS es 11, xxxvii-xli.
3. Gail Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 108, 111–28.
4. Penelope Granger, "Devotion to Drama: The N-Town Play and Religious Observance in East Anglia," *Medieval East Anglia*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, 302–17, 302.
5. Colin Fewer, "The 'Fyfigure' of the Market: The N-Town Cycle and East Anglian Lay Piety," *Philological Quarterly* 77 (1998): 117–147, 120.
6. Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, 127.
7. Noteworthy exceptions are Pamela M. King and Lynette Muir. King, "The York Plays and the Feast of Corpus Christi: A Reconsideration," *Medieval English Theatre* 22 (2000): 13–32, argues that this critical oversight is a lingering effect of scholars' rejection of the theory that these cycle plays were secularized versions of Latin liturgical dramas. Muir, "The Mass on the Medieval Stage," *Drama in the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays: Second Series*, ed. Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe, 223–39, notes the widespread influence of the Mass on medieval drama, which is apparent in plays that offer an exegesis of the doctrine of transubstantiation or stage the institution of the sacrament on Holy Thursday.
8. Eleanor Prosser, *Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays*, 141.
9. Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 234.
10. Stephen Spector, ed., *The N-Town Play*, vol. 2, EETS ss 12, 495.
11. Victor Scherb, "Liturgy and Community in N-Town *Passion Play I*," *Comparative Drama* 29 (1995–6): 478–92, 485. Scherb notes other liturgical parallels in the play. At the start of the play, Satan appears on stage. Scherb compares Satan's departure from the stage to the priest's act of exorcising flowers and leaves at the Palm Sunday liturgy (480).
12. Theresa Coletti, "Sacrament and Sacrifice in the N-Town *Passion*," *Medievalia* 7 (1984): 239–64, 243.
13. Fewer, "The 'Fyfigure' of the Market," 132.
14. Scherb, "Liturgy and Community," 478.
15. Mary M. Schaefer, "Twelfth Century Latin Commentaries on the Mass: the Relationship of the Priest to Christ and to the People," *Studia liturgica* 15 (1982–1983): 76–86.

16. All citations from the *N-Town Passion Play I* are taken from *The N-Town Play*, ed. Spector, EETS ss 11.
17. There are no stage directions to close curtains, which perhaps means that the characters are visible on the scaffold while the other scene is playing.
18. Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 234.
19. *Ibid.*, 234.
20. Granger, "Devotion to Drama," 315.
21. Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, ed. Michael G. Sergeant, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, 151, lines 15–18.
22. *The Poems of John Audelay*, ed. Ella Keats Whiting, EETS os 184, 69.
23. William of Shoreham, *The Poems of William Shoreham*, ed. M. Konrath, EETS es 86, 27, lines 736–42.
24. There is a popular idea that "*hoc est enim corpus meum*" has been identified as the source of the magical phrase "hocus pocus."
25. *The Golden Legend as Englished by William Caxton*, vol. 7, 239.
26. *A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, in *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons, EETS os 71, 147, lines 674–6.
27. Shoreham, *Poems*, 19.
28. *The Southern Passion*, ed. Beatrice Daw Brown, EETS os 169.
29. Robert Mannyng, *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord, and the hours of the passion*, ed. J. Meadows Cowper, EETS os 60, 7.
30. *Cursor Mundi*, ed. Richard Morris, EETS os 62, 872.
31. *The Northern Passion*, ed. Frances A. Foster, EETS os 145, 25.
32. Prosser, *Drama and Religion*, 123.
33. Prosser, *Drama and Religion*, 145.
34. Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, 149, lines 7–8.
35. Love, *Mirror*, 149, lines 22–4.
36. *Ibid.*, 149, line 24.
37. *Ibid.*, 149, line 31.
38. *Ibid.*, 149, lines 39–40.
39. *Ibid.*, 151, lines 31–3.
40. *Ibid.*, 151, lines 9–12.
41. *Memoriale Credencium: A Late Middle English Manual of Theology for Lay People: edited from Bodley MS Tanner 201*, ed. J. H. L. Kengen, 172.
42. *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. Edward H. Weatherly, EETS os 200 (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 102–6; John Mirk, *Mirk's Festial*, ed. Theodore Erbe, EETS es 96, 117–20.
43. Anne Hudson, "Wyclif and the English Language," ed. Anthony Kenny, 85–103, contends that while there is "little chance" that the text is actually by Wyclif, his influence on this vernacular homily is evident (103).
44. *Wycklyffes Wycket*, [1502], Avir.
45. Martin Luther, "The Abomination of the Secret Mass," in *Luther's Works*, trans. Abdel Ross Wentz, 36: 503–25, 503.

46. *The dysclosyng of the canon of ye popysh Masse, with a sermon annexed vnto it of ye famous clerke of worthy memorye.*
47. E. C. Ratcliff, "The Liturgical Work of Archbishop Cranmer," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 7 (1956): 189–203, 195.
48. Another noteworthy post-Reformation text on the silent Canon is the epistolary debate between Thomas Harding (1516–72) and John Jewell (1522–71). See article 16, "Of Consecration under silence," in *The Works of John Jewell*, ed. J. Ayre, 2: 697–707.
49. *House of Lords Debate on the Eucharist, December 1548* (British Library Royal MS 17 B. XXXIX, ff. 1–31), in appendix to *Edward VI and the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. F. A. Gasquet and E. Bishop, 405.
50. *The Two Liturgies, A. D. 1549, and A. D. 1552: with other Documents set forth by Authority in the Reign of King Edward VI*, ed. Joseph Ketley, Parker Society 29, 29.
51. Fewer, "The 'Figure' of the Market," 118.
52. *Treatise on the Manner and Mede of the Mass*, 147, lines 674–6.
53. Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays*, 236, 397 n. 62.
54. Lauren Lepow, "Middle English Elevation Prayers and the Corpus Christi Cycles," *English Language Notes* 17 (1979), 85–88, 86.
55. *Speculum Christiani: a Middle English religious treatise of the 14th century*, ed. Gustaf Holmstedt, EETS os 182, 160.
56. *The Poems of John Audelay*, 62–3, lines 15–22.
57. *The Minor Poems of the Vernon Manuscript*, ed. Carl Horstmann, EETS os 98, 1892, 24–5.
58. *The Lay Folk's Mass Book*, ed. Thomas Frederick Simmons, EETS os 71, 1879, 41.
59. In a related yet slightly different vein, Eamon Duffy, "Lay Appropriation of the Sacraments in the Later Middle Ages," *New Blackfriars* 77 (1996): 53–68, argues for the "paraliturgical proliferation of secondary rites" such as healing rituals that invoke the meaning of the sacraments (66).
60. Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 25.
61. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580*, 111.
62. See Cæsarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*, trans H. von E. Scott and C. C. Swinton Bland, 2 vols.
63. *Non-cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. Norman Davis, EETS ss 1.
64. *Tretise of Miraculis Pleyinge*, ed. Clifford Davidson, Medieval Institute Publications, 38, lines 132–7.
65. *Chester: Records of Early English Drama*, ed. Lawrence M. Clopper, 247.
66. Robert M. Kingdon, "The Genevan Revolution in Public Worship," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 20 (1999): 264–80, argues that Protestant worship valued orality/aurality, in particular the sermon over iconographic displays. In a similar vein, Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 195–6, writes that Protestant worship "attempted to place the

Word of scripture above the mediating rite of the liturgy,” that is, the Eucharist.

Conclusion: Resounding Voices

1. Joseph Campbell, *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor* (New World Library, 2001), 111.

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INDEX

Index includes texts, ancient and medieval authors, historical events, contemporary critics, and selected topics.

- Alfred, 18–20, 83–4; *Hierdboc*, 91–4,
99–104, 208 n. 38
see also confession; pastoral care;
vernacular, translation
- Allen, Valerie, 154, 215 n. 3
- Altman, Rick, 101, 199 n. 46
see also voice, phenomenology
- Andreas*, 18, 51, 53–79 *passim*,
200 n. 49, 204 n. 11, 206 n. 38
see also saints, Andrew;
ventriloquism, heterodox;
voice, Christian vocal
economy
- Aquinas, Thomas, 114, 212 n. 14
- Aristotle, 8, 15, 75
see also voice, soul
- Arundel, Thomas, 133, 180
see also vernacular, translation
- Audelay, John, 177, 185–6
see also Eucharist, elevation prayers
- Augustine of Canterbury, 157
- Augustine of Hippo, 43, 90, 161,
197 n. 6, 200 n. 48
- Ayenbite of Inuit*, 125, 143, 216 n. 6
- Elfric, 15, 18–20, 83–91 *passim*,
94–9, 103, 105–8
homilies
On Auguries, 64–5
Easter, 46–7, 203 n. 55
In Natale Plurimorum Apostolorum,
94–7, 98, 102
Saint Benedict, 85–6
Saint Edmund, 65
Sermon on the Book of Kings,
63–4
Seventeenth Sunday after
Pentecost, 89
Shrove Sunday, 89–91, 92
Witch of Endor, 7, 75, 107–8
other texts:
Letter to Wulfsgie III, 103
Preface to Genesis, 106–7, 108
silent days, 97–9, 209 nn. 52, 55
see also confession; homilies;
pastoral care; vernacular,
homilies
- Barlow, Frank, 86
- Bayless, Martha, 141, 144
- Bedingfield, Brad, 89
see also confession, Anglo-Saxon
- Beleth, Jean, 10, 178
see also liturgical commentaries
- Benjamin, Walter, 101, 105, 108, 122
- Bible
books of the:
Ezekiel, 95
Genesis, 106–7, 108
Hosea, 96
Kings, 63–4, 217 n. 20
Isaiah, 99, 103–4
Jeremiah, 1, 5, 41, 69, 74, 166–7,
197 nn. 12–14, 203 n. 42,
221 n. 81

Bible—*Continued*

- see also* ventriloquism, heterodox
- John, 175, 176, 177
- Luke, 89, 107, 133, 177, 184, 188,
197 n. 10, 206 n. 41,
211 n. 84, 215 nn. 63, 68
- see also* ventriloquism,
heterodox
- Mark, 117, 206 n. 40
- Matthew, 41, 56, 176, 177,
203 n. 43
- Samuel, 4–5, 107–8, 133, 197 n. 7,
212 n. 17
- see also* ventriloquism,
heterodox
- see also* speech, Christian standards
for
- Blair, John, 83
- Blamires, Alcuin, 20, 129–30, 133,
211 n. 1
- Blickling homilist, 18, 54, 55, 58, 59,
63, 71, 72, 95, 105
- Boenig, Robert, 53, 56, 59, 200 n. 49,
203 n. 55, 205 n. 14
- Book of Vices and Virtues*, 125, 143,
149, 158, 216 n. 6, 219 n. 63
- Canon (of the Mass), 9–12, 14, 18, 19,
20, 21, 122, 125–31, 134–5,
139–91 *passim*, 195, 197–8
n. 16, 198 n. 27, 199 n. 38,
214 n. 40, 216 n. 10, 220
nn. 67, 75
- clerical privilege, 125–30 *passim*,
141–53 *passim*, 172
- lay subversion of, 153–68, 174–7,
180–3
- see also* Eucharist, transubstantiation
formula; secrets, liturgical
- Carruthers, Mary, 13, 33, 43, 127,
143, 201 n. 23, 202 n. 31,
203 n. 47, 216 n. 12
- Cædmon, 32, 56, 201 n. 20
- see also* rumination
- Cæsarius of Heisterbach, 117, 124,
159, 187, 211–12 n. 6

- Chaucer, 6, 8, 20–1, 109–35 *passim*,
139–68 *passim*, 211–12 n. 6,
215 n. 1, 216 n. 7, 217 n. 18,
218 n. 35, 219 n. 45,
220 n. 67
- works of:
- Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, 117, 123
- Friar's Tale*, 16, 109–35 *passim*,
167–8
- House of Fame*, 8, 163–4
- Knight's Tale*, 216 n. 7
- Manciple's Tale*, 115, 131–2, 141,
212 n. 19, 215 n. 60
- The Merchant's Tale*, 141
- The Miller's Tale*, 160, 216 n. 7
- Nun's Priest's Tale*, 117, 166
- Pardoner's Tale*, 126, 155
- Parson's Tale*, 115
- Prioress's Tale*, 117–19, 121, 160–1
- Second Nun's Tale*, 123, 150, 160–1
- Summoner's Tale*, 16–17, 20–1,
127, 134, 139–68 *passim*
- Wife of Bath's Tale*, 111, 131, 133,
168, 211 n. 2
- Chester cycle, 171, 172, 174, 175, 177,
184, 189
- see also* drama
- Chrysostomos, 3, 34, 197 n. 6
- see also* ventriloquism, heterodox
- Clark, Roy Peter, 154, 218 nn. 35, 41
- Clayton, Mary, 85
- clerical authority, 6, 10, 16, 20, 105,
108, 110–12, 129, 130, 132,
139, 145, 151, 160, 167, 186,
194, 216 n. 10
- see also* Canon (of the Mass);
Eucharist, transubstantiation
formula; homilies; pastoral
care; secrets, liturgical;
ventriloquism, lay
- Cloud of Unknowing*, 156, 219 n. 47
- Coleman, Joyce, 13, 30
- Coletti, Theresa, 171
- confession, 10, 14, 15, 78, 83, 194,
206 n. 1, 208 n. 33,
208 n. 43

- Anglo-Saxon, 88–99
 Chaucer's depiction of, 109, 110,
 111–14, 131, 139, 152–4,
 211 n. 2
 Continental, 87–8
 see also secrets, confessional
 Connor, Steven, 4, 7, 75, 84–6, 197
 n. 1, 202 n. 26, 204 n. 57,
 205 n. 28, 210 nn. 72, 73,
 75, 212 n. 17
 see also ventriloquism
 Cranmer, Thomas, 182
 see also Protestant Reformation
 Craun, Edwin, 6, 14, 116, 132, 152,
 160, 218 n. 37
Cursor Mundi, 116, 179, 183

 Derrida, Jacques, 75, 103, 107,
 200 n. 7
 Drama, Chester, 171, 172, 174, 175,
 177, 184, 189
 Cornish, 171, 172, 175, 177
 N-Town, 17, 20–1, 169–91 *passim*,
 193, 221 n. 11
 Play of the Sacrament, 188
 Towneley cycle, 171, 175, 177, 184
 Tretise of Miraclys Pleyenge, 189
 York, 171, 175, 177, 183, 184, 195
 Duffy, Eamon, 187, 197 n. 16, 223 n. 59
 Durandus, William, 11, 146, 156,
 199 n. 35, 217 n. 17, 219 n. 48
 see also liturgical commentaries
The dyscloying of the canon of ye poppysh
 Masse, 182
 see also Protestant Reformation,
 texts

 Edison, Thomas, 35, 36, 202 nn. 28, 29
 see also ventriloquism, technological
Elene, 75, 77, 78
 see also saints, Helen
 Eucharist
 elevation prayers, 17, 170, 184–91
 transubstantiation formula, 10, 17,
 45, 116, 122, 130, 151, 163,
 169, 170–91 *passim*, 221 n. 7
 see also Canon (of the Mass); secrets,
 liturgical
 visual devotion to, 124, 151,
 184–91 *passim*

Fasciculus Morum, 149
 Fewer, Colin, 169, 171–2, 182
 First Eucharistic Controversy, 46
First Prayer Book of 1549, 182
 see also Protestant Reformation,
 texts
 Fleming, John V., 154, 215 n. 3,
 216 n. 4, 218 n. 38
 Fleming, Martha H., 143, 152
 Fourth Lateran Council, 6, 11, 14, 20,
 109, 160
 Frank, Roberta, 30, 97, 201 n. 14,
 209 n. 53
 Frantzen, Allen, 88, 89, 91, 94

 Gatch, Malcolm McC., 105, 106
 Gerson, Jean, 121
 see also Eucharist, visual devotion to
 Gibson, Gail, 169
 gluttony, 139, 141–53, 155, 156, 160
 see also speech, body parts as origins
 for, stomach/belly
 Godden, Malcolm, 85, 95, 106,
 209 n. 55
 Godfrey, Mary, 128, 129, 211 n. 1
 Gower, John, 8
 Granger, Penelope, 169, 176
 Gregory the Great, 10, 18, 19, 84, 85,
 87, 90, 91, 93, 95, 104, 105,
 158, 198 n. 30, 208 n. 38
 see also homilies; pastoral care
 Grosseteste, Robert, 11, 124
 Grundy, Lynne, 88–9, 203 n. 55

 Hanning, Robert, 155
 Hegel, 8, 75
 see also voice, soul
 heterodoxy, *see* Jews; Lollards;
 Mermedonians;
 ventriloquism, heterodox
 Hill, Joyce, 97–8

- Hill, Thomas, 38, 71
History of the Mass, 10, 122, 178
 see also liturgical commentaries
- Holsinger, Bruce, 117
- Homilies, 20, 84–7, 89–91, 94–9,
 105–8, 139, 144–54, 160,
 161, 166–7
 Anonymous, 76, 126
 Ælfric, see Ælfric, homilies
- Blickling, 18, 54, 55, 58, 59, 63, 71,
 72, 95, 105
- Gregory, 87, 90, 95, 104–5
- Mirk, 126, 180, 214 n. 42
- Speculum Sacerdotale*, 150–1, 155,
 166, 180, 219 n. 44,
 222 n. 42
- Vercelli homilies, 42, 54, 73, 95,
 105
- Wulfstan, 18, 88
Wyclif's Wycket, 180–1, 222 n. 43
- Honorius, 10, 178
 see also liturgical commentaries
- Howe, Nicholas, 45
- Hudson, Anne, 124, 180, 214 n. 40,
 220 n. 74, 222 n. 43
- Idhe, Don, 8
 see also voice, phenomenology
- Isidore of Seville, 35–6
 see also voice, of the page
- Jacobus de Voragine, 117, 218 n. 30
 see also saints
- Jager, Eric, 13, 43, 203 n. 47
- jangling, 112, 128, 158–9, 195
 see also speech, sins of the tongue
- Jerome, 113, 148, 197 n. 6
- Jews, 15, 18, 54, 56, 63, 66–70, 73,
 117–19, 125–6, 161, 171,
 173–4, 188–9, 213 n. 29
 see also ventriloquism,
 heterodox
- John of Salisbury, 36
 see also voice, of the page
- Jones, Christopher A., 13, 45, 86,
 209 n. 55
- Joyce, James, 35, 36
 see also ventriloquism, technological
- King, Pamela M., 221 n. 7
- Kleist, Aaron J., 90
- Knowles, David, 85, 86, 207 n. 10
- Kolve, V. A., 127–8, 129, 211 n. 1,
 216 n. 4, 220 nn. 68, 77
- laity, see ventriloquism, lay
- Lay Folk's Catechism, 120, 149, 219
 n. 62
 see also pastoral care
- Lay Folk's Mass Book*, 155, 159, 160,
 186, 198 n. 28, 218 n. 43
- Legenda Aurea* (Golden Legend), 150,
 218 n. 30
 see also *History of the Mass*; Jacobus
 de Voragine; saints
- Lerer, Seth, 27, 30, 43, 56, 200 n. 5,
 203 n. 48
- Levitan, Alan, 154, 165, 218 nn. 40,
 41, 220 n. 77
- Levy, Bernard S., 154, 215 n. 3,
 218 n. 41, 220 n. 77
- Liturgical commentaries,
 authors and texts
 Alamar of Metz, 172
 Beleth, John, 10, 178
 Durandus, William, 146, 156
History of the Mass, 10, 178
 Honorius, 10, 178
 Lothar of Segni (Pope Innocent
 III), 172
 Pseudo-Alcuin, 10, 178
 Pseudo-Hugh of St. Victor, 10,
 172, 178
 on priest's impersonation of Christ,
 172
 on silence of the Canon, 10, 146,
 178
- Lochrie, Karma, 14, 111, 123,
 220 n. 73
- Lollards, 8, 20, 124, 165, 175, 177, 181,
 183, 189, 190, 214 n. 40,
 220 n. 74

- see also* Mass, Lollard; Wyclif, John;
Wyclif's Wycket
 Lords' Debate on the Sacraments,
 182–3
see also Protestant Reformation,
 texts
 Love, Nicholas, 177, 179–80, 183
 Luther, Martin, 21, 181–2
see also Protestant Reformation
 Lydgate, John, 8, 185
 Lyndwood, William, 11

 Mann, Jill, 143, 152, 217 n. 12
 Mannyng, Robert, 116, 179, 183
 Mass, types of
 Lollard, 124, 165, 214 n. 40
 parodic, 144, 147, 155, 217 n. 15
 Post-Vatican II, 195–6
 private, 142
 Tridentine, 195
see also Canon (of the Mass);
 Eucharist
 McGann, Jerome, 33
 Meaney, Audrey, 64
Memoriale Credencium, 116, 155, 180, 183
 Mermedonians, 15, 18, 53–61, 63, 66,
 69, 70–4, 75, 76, 79
see also ventriloquism, heterodox
 Mirk, John, 126, 180, 214 n. 42
see also homilies
 Muir, Lynette, 221 n. 7
 Mulvey, Laura, 187
see also Eucharist, visual devotion to
Myroure of Oure Ladye, 149, 219 n. 62

 Niles, John D., 25–6, 201 nn. 11, 14
 Northern Homily Cycle, 180
see also homilies
Northern Passion, 116, 166, 179, 183
 N-Town cycle, 17, 20–1, 169–91
 passim, 193, 221 n. 11
see also drama

 O'Keeffe, Katherine O'Brien, 30
 Olson, Glending, 154
 Ong, Walter, 8, 29, 201 n. 8

 orality, *see* speech, voice
 Orchard, Andy, 25, 200 n. 4
 Origen, 3, 10, 34
see also ventriloquism, heterodox

 pastoral care, 2, 10, 19
 Anglo-Saxon, 83–108 *passim*, 109
 post-Lateran, 20, 109, 116, 121,
 127, 128, 131–2, 139, 141,
 143, 144, 180
 Patterson, Lee, 119, 213 n. 29
 Peckham, John, 20, 109, 116, 180
see also pastoral care, post-Lateran
 penance, *see* confession
Play of the Sacrament, 188
see also drama
Praxeis, 58, 59, 62, 67, 71, 205 n. 14
see also *Andreas*
 Prosser, Eleanor, 171, 179
 Protestant Reformation
 texts, 181–3, 191
 worship, 2, 14, 21, 46, 175, 193,
 195
 Pseudo-Alcuin, 10, 97, 178
see also liturgical commentaries
 Pseudo-Dionysius, 114, 156
 Pseudo-Hugh of Saint Victor, 10,
 172, 178
see also liturgical commentaries
pythia, 3–4, 7–8, 9, 40, 65, 70, 114,
 115, 125, 134, 167,
 197 n. 1
see also ventriloquism, heterodox

 reading, 13–14, 15, 25–51 *passim*, 85,
 104–5, 106, 143, 194, 195,
 201 nn. 20, 21, 202 nn. 25, 36,
 203 nn. 47, 48
see also rumination
Recensio Casanatensis, 58, 59, 61, 62,
 66–9
see also *Andreas*
 Rée, Jonathan, 8, 75, 210 n. 74
see also voice, phenomenology
 Richard of Bury, 36
see also voice, of the page

riddles, 25–51 *passim*

Exeter Book

Bible (#26), 26, 27, 28, 31, 32,
37–40, 48

Bible (#67), 27, 37, 40–3, 48

bookmoth (#47), 26, 29–30

chalice (#59), 14, 27, 37, 43–8

chalice/paten (#48), 14, 27, 37,
48–50

dough (#45), 50

inkhorn (#17), 26, 33–4,
202 n. 24

inkhorn (#87), 26, 28, 33,
202 n. 24

inkhorn (#92), 26, 28, 33,
202 n. 24

key (#44), 50

magpie (#24), 25

nightingale (#8), 25

one-eyed seller of garlic (#85),
50

Latin

Eusebius (*De membrano*), 25, 31,
32

Symphosius, 17

Tatwine (*De membrano*), 17, 25,
31

Rubin, Miri, 11

rumination, 32–4, 42–4, 47, 56, 59,
68, 71, 77, 97, 143, 164,
201 n. 20, 203 n. 47

see also reading

saints

Andrew, 53–79 *passim*

Cecelia, 161, 167

Edmund, 65–6

Helen, 75, 77–8

John (the Apostle), 155, 166, 171

John the Baptist, 170–1, 189–91

Margaret, 63, 66

Matthew, 53, 55–9, 62, 79, 204 n. 5

Thomas (the apostle), 150–2, 190

Thomas Becket, 117, 156

Schaefer, Mary M., 116, 172

see also liturgical commentaries

Scherb, Victor, 171, 172, 221 n. 11
secrets

alchemical, 122–3

confessional, 111–13

liturgical, 11, 16–17, 18, 21, 49,
110, 125, 127, 140, 142, 145,
146, 147, 151, 153, 154, 155,
156, 157, 158, 164, 165, 166,
170, 172, 173, 174, 176, 181,
187, 191

see also Canon (of the Mass)

scatological, 16, 155, 217 n. 20,
220 n. 73

sexual, 112, 126, 212 n. 19

Shoreham, William, 177, 178–9,
183

Somerset, Fiona, 133, 163, 167,
215 n. 64, 220 n. 67

South English Legendary, 150, 218 n. 30
see also saints

Southern Passion, 116, 179, 183

Speculum Christiani, 184–5

Speculum Sacerdotale, 150–1, 155, 166,
180, 219 n. 44, 222 n. 42

see also homilies

speech

body parts as origins

ass, 16, 140, 141, 153–68 *passim*,
216 n. 7, 220 n. 67

head(less), 4, 65, *see also* saints,
Edmund

heart, 92, 94, 148–50, 160, 161,
163

stomach/belly, 3, 16–17, 33–4,

43, 62, 65, 96, 139–53

passim, 166–7, 203 n. 47,
212 n. 19, *see also* gluttony,

rumination

throat(less), 87, 104, 105, 121,
160–1, 167

Christian standards for

Bible, 6, 140, 141–3, 167

mouth, 1, 3, 4, 5, 26, 33–4, 36,
39–40, 41, 42, 43, 54, 55,
57, 63, 64–5, 70, 71–2, 73,
74, 78, 79, 92–4, 105, 139,

- 140, 141, 147, 148, 149, 160,
161, 167, 203 n. 42, 216 n. 6
silence, 6–7, 9, 11, 17, 85, 110,
122, 124, 132, 140, 142,
145, 147–69 *passim*, 178, 181,
182, 194, 196, 197 n. 16,
207 n. 10, 223 n. 48
sins of the tongue
 jangling, 112, 128, 158–9,
 195
 minstrelsy, 115, 116, 212 n. 18,
 218 n. 32
 oaths and cursing, 16, 109–10,
 125–31 *passim*, 132, 211 n. 1,
 214 n. 45
Sterne, Jonathan, 12–13, 35, 37, 102,
 199 n. 46
 see also voice, phenomenology
Stewart, Garrett, 32, 201 n. 21, 202
 n. 25
 see also reading
Symphosius, 17
 see also riddles
Szittyá, Penn R., 154, 218 n. 40,
 220 n. 77

Taussig, Michael, 119 n. 46, 203 n. 41,
 210 n. 70, 215 n. 62
 see also voice, phenomenology
Three Kings of Cologne, 151–2
 see also saints, Thomas (the apostle)
Towneley cycle, 171, 175, 177, 184
 see also drama
Travis, Peter, 155
Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the
 Mass, 122, 128, 155, 157,
 158, 178, 219 n. 44,
 220 n. 68
Tretise of Miraculis Pleyinge, 189
 see also drama

ventriloquism
 heterodox, 1, 3–9 *passim*, 34, 40, 50,
 53–79 *passim*, 114, 115, 125,
 133–4, 150, 167, 197 n. 1,
 205 n. 35, 216 n. 7, 217 n. 18
 lay, 91–7, 125–35 *passim*, 153–68
 passim, 169–78 *passim*,
 184–6
 technological, 7, 13, 15–16, 26,
 35–6, 41, 86, 102–4, 105,
 202 n. 29, 210 n. 75
Vercelli homilies, 42, 54, 73,
 95 105
 see also homilies
vernacular
 preaching, 14, 18–19, 20, 74, 83,
 84, 86, 95, 98, 222 n. 43
 translation, 14, 16, 19, 21, 83, 91,
 106–9, 133, 176, 178–83,
 215 n. 64, 220 n. 67
voice
 Christian vocal economy, 54,
 72–9
 demonic, 16, 57, 63, 86, 107–8,
 111–25 *passim*, 127, 130–4,
 141, 167, 215 n. 68
 of the page, 14, 35–6, 39, 42, 105
 phenomenology, 8, 12–13, 35, 75,
 84, 100–4, 205 n. 28
 phonocentrism, 29–30, 75,
 106–7
 presence, 13, 15, 17, 26, 27, 34–42,
 46, 48, 49–50, 54–5, 65, 73,
 75, 79, 85, 101–2
 relationship to writing, 25–51
 passim
 and the soul, 8–9, 27, 49–50, 55,
 75–7, 206 n. 53
 and space, 84–8, 100–1
 see also speech, ventriloquism

Wilcox, Jonathan, 85, 86, 105
William of Ockham, 163
Williamson, Craig, 29, 44
Woolf, Rosemary, 171, 175, 184
Woolgar, C. M., 83, 149
writing, *see* reading; vernacular,
 translation; voice,
 relationship to writing
Wulfstan, 18, 88
 see also homilies

- Wyclif, John, 8, 12, 109, 114, 119–20, 130, 133, 139, 163, 165, 167, 168, 180–1, 213 n. 31, 222 n. 43
see also Lollards
- Wyclif's Wycket*, 180–1, 222 n. 43
- York cycle, 171, 175, 177, 183, 184, 195
see also drama